

The Senate

Environment and
Communications References
Committee

Offshore wind industry consultation
process

June 2025

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Terms of reference

The consultation process undertaken on behalf of the Australian Government into the offshore wind industry, with particular reference to:

- (a) the efficacy of community engagement and benefit in planning, developing and operating the offshore wind industry;
- (b) community engagement within the existing Australian Government offshore wind industry regulatory and legislative frameworks;
- (c) the adherence to the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Traditional Owners of the affected Sea Country by the Australian Government and offshore wind industry;
- (d) the impact of the offshore wind industry on marine life and marine environments in Australian waters, including strategies for impact minimisation and management; and
- (e) any other related matters.

Abbreviations

ACCESS	Australian Centre for Culture, Environment, Society and Space
AEIC	Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
AMSYS	Australian Marine Spatial Information System
ARFF	Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation
CEC	Clean Energy Council
the committee	Senate Environment and Communications References Committee
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
ECMC	Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GLaWAC	Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
GMTOAC	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
GW	gigawatts
HJA	Hunter Jobs Alliance
the inquiry	Senate Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry into the offshore wind industry consultation process

the minister	Minister for Climate Change and Energy
NETP	National Energy Transformation Partnership
NSTP	Nationally Significant Transmission Project
NSW	New South Wales
OEI Act	<i>Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021</i>
the regulator	Offshore Infrastructure Regulator
SIA	Seafood Industry Australia
Tas	Tasmania
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
US	United States
Vic	Victoria
VNPA	Victorian National Parks Association
WA	Western Australia
WAFIC	Western Australian Fishing Industry Council
WTOAC	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

- 6.49** The committee recommends that the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) consider ways to improve engagement with relevant First Nations and Traditional Owner groups in areas declared suitable for offshore wind developments.

Recommendation 2

- 6.53** The committee recommends that DCCEEW engagement during public consultation processes provide targeted and localised information for each declared area. This should include a meaningful, physical presence to provide information, listen to concerns, and help the local community to feed into management plans and desired community benefit from projects.
- 6.54** Further, DCCEEW should improve its communication with local communities to provide a clear narrative about the broader context of offshore renewable energy, including the need to transition away from ageing fossil fuel generation assets and other reasons for the energy transition.

Recommendation 3

- 6.55** The committee recommends that DCCEEW in conjunction with the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, oversee ongoing engagement from proponents with local businesses, worker representatives, marine users, and community groups as a central point for engagement.

Recommendation 4

- 6.56** The committee recommends the Australian Government and DCCEEW proactively ensure that foreign actors, spam engagement, and misinformation and disinformation do not overpower local community voices from being heard in local public debate.

Recommendation 5

- 6.58** The committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the Offshore Electricity Act 2021 to require public consultation on management plans submitted to the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, prior to approval of the plan for construction activities and the granting of a commercial license.

Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 On 3 July 2024, the Senate referred an inquiry into the offshore wind industry consultation process (the inquiry) to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee (the committee) for inquiry and report by 13 February 2025, with the following terms of reference:

The consultation process undertaken on behalf of the Australian Government into the offshore wind industry, with particular reference to:

- (a) the efficacy of community engagement and benefit in planning, developing and operating the offshore wind industry;
- (b) community engagement within the existing Australian Government offshore wind industry regulatory and legislative frameworks;
- (c) the adherence to the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Traditional Owners of the affected Sea Country by the Australian Government and offshore wind industry;
- (d) the impact of the offshore wind industry on marine life and marine environments in Australian waters, including strategies for impact minimisation and management; and
- (e) any other related matters.¹

- 1.2 The committee was granted extensions of time to report to 13 March 2025, 24 April 2025 and 5 June 2025.²

Structure of the report

- 1.3 This report focuses on the steps taken by the Australian Government to consult on the first stage of the development of an offshore wind industry and the key issues raised by stakeholders throughout the government's consultation process.

- 1.4 This report comprises six chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides details of the inquiry and background information on a potential offshore wind industry in Australia, and a summary of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's (AEIC) 2023 review of public and private sector community engagement in planning, developing and operating renewable energy infrastructure;
- Chapter 2 outlines the Australian Government's consultation process underway in the six priority areas for offshore wind, including the

¹ *Journals of the Senate*, No. 118, 3 July 2024, pp. 3617–3619.

² *Journals of the Senate*, No. 150, 10 February 2025, p. 4759; Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, [Progress Report](#), 5 March 2025; Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, [Progress Report](#), 24 April 2025.

legislative framework, and an overview of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) within the consultation process;

- Chapter 3 contains submitter views on community engagement in the offshore wind consultation process, including the process and timeframes for community engagement;
- Chapter 4 sets out views on the consultation process relating to the impacts of offshore wind projects on the marine environment and the fishing and tourism industries, as well as issues relating to noise and light pollution;
- Chapter 5 examines the recognition of FPIC within the consultation process, and views of First Nations and other submitters on whether this was adhered to; and
- Chapter 6 contains the committee's view and recommendations.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.5 Details of the inquiry were advertised on the committee's [website](#), including a call for submissions by 30 August 2024. The committee wrote directly to various stakeholders to invite them to make submissions.
- 1.6 The committee received 315 submissions, which are listed in Appendix 1 and are available on the inquiry's [webpage](#). In addition, the committee received around 94 proforma emails from individuals through a campaign calling for a public hearing in Busselton. This campaign was noted on the inquiry webpage, and the correspondence was not published.
- 1.7 The committee has carefully considered all contributions and is grateful to those that took the time to participate and make submissions to this inquiry in good faith.
- 1.8 Unfortunately, the politicisation of this inquiry by certain senators has impeded the committee's ability to undertake genuine inquiry. The use of this inquiry to platform misinformation and disinformation has been inflammatory and has entirely overpowered local community voices, detracting from the intent of the inquiry to understand and improve community consultation. Genuine concerns have been sidelined to prioritise a political campaign.
- 1.9 The committee was unable to find a time to meet for a hearing. This was deliberately misconstrued for political purposes by some members of the committee, and members of the public were misled. As a result, the committee agreed to conduct the inquiry on the large amount of written evidence and did not hold a public hearing.

Background information

Australia's changing energy needs

- 1.10 Australia's energy needs are set to increase, with the source of that energy changing. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and

Water (DCCEEW) stated that Australia is moving away from coal fired power stations, with most retiring over the next decade.³ The Australian Government has announced measures to address this generation gap and put in place steps to replace coal fired power with 'reliable, secure, clean and affordable sources of energy'.⁴

- 1.11 In July 2023, the Australian Government announced the Net Zero 2050 Plan to transform the energy system to deliver clean and reliable energy in line with legislative requirements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.⁵ As a key component of achieving the 43 per cent reduction by 2030, the Australian Government has committed to an 82 per cent renewable electricity target by 2030. In 2023, renewables contributed nearly 40 per cent of Australia's electricity supply, so significant additional renewable generation capacity will be required to achieve the 82 per cent target.⁶
- 1.12 The Net Zero Plan will consider key enabling technologies, including renewable electricity such as offshore wind.⁷
- 1.13 Stage 1 of the development of an offshore wind industry in Australia (zoning) is being undertaken by the Australian Government in consultation with communities who may be affected or impacted by offshore wind projects.⁸ After the declaration of an area for future offshore wind development, developers that receive feasibility licences will conduct further consultation on their proposed projects in Stage 2 of the offshore wind process.⁹ The process is outlined in Chapter 2.

The potential for the Australian offshore wind industry

- 1.14 DCCEEW stated that offshore wind 'is a proven energy generation source' and noted the 'significant ambition' internationally to deploy more offshore wind to decarbonise energy systems and provide energy security. In 2023, globally, there

³ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), [Building an offshore wind industry](#) (accessed 31 October 2024).

⁴ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

⁵ The Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, 'Address to Clean Energy Council', *Speech*, 18 July 2023; Austrade, [Go green with Australia](#) (accessed 24 October 2024).

⁶ Clean Energy Council, [Clean Energy Australia 2024](#), March 2024, p. 2.

⁷ DCCEEW, [Net Zero](#) (accessed 24 October 2024). Other Australian Government policies to reduce emissions include the Safeguard Mechanism, the Capacity Investment Scheme and New Vehicle Efficiency Standard.

⁸ DCCEEW, [Building an offshore wind industry](#) (accessed 31 October 2024).

⁹ DCCEEW, [Building an offshore wind industry](#) (accessed 31 October 2024).

was over 75 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind generating electricity, with an annual growth of around 15 per cent since 2019.¹⁰

- 1.15 According to the International Energy Agency, the world's offshore wind energy potential is more than 11 times global electricity demand for 2040.¹¹
- 1.16 In late 2021, the Australian Parliament passed the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act), which regulates the development of offshore electricity infrastructure in Commonwealth waters. The OEI Act came into effect in mid-2022.
- 1.17 The location of an Australian offshore wind industry is currently under development by the Australian Government, with no currently operating offshore windfarms. DCCEEW stated that it is 'enabling this potential new industry by developing a regulatory framework and industry development plan'.¹²
- 1.18 According to DCCEEW, Australia has 'some of the best wind resources in the world', with a single offshore wind project capable of producing '1.5 to 2 gigawatts of energy' at maximum capacity.¹³ The potential capacity of an established offshore wind industry in the six declared areas (discussed below) is 67.4 GW.¹⁴ This compares to Australia's current coal generation assets of approximately 21 GW.¹⁵
- 1.19 Offshore wind is a prominent industry in countries including China, Germany, Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom and the United States. In Australia, however, the offshore wind industry is in its formative years.¹⁶
- 1.20 DCCEEW stated that offshore wind projects generate more energy than those on land, and require fewer installations as the turbines are larger and wind speeds are higher and more reliable offshore. Offshore winds are advantageous as they are often highest during the afternoon when consumer demand peaks and other forms of renewable energy (such as solar power) begin to decrease.¹⁷

¹⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

¹¹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

¹² DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

¹³ DCCEEW, [Building an offshore wind industry](#) (accessed 31 October 2024).

¹⁴ DCCEEW, [Australia's offshore wind areas](#) (accessed 13 January 2025).

¹⁵ Australian Energy Regulator, [Registered capacity by fuel source – regions](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

¹⁶ World Economic Forum, [These are the countries bidding to become wind power superpowers](#), 29 March 2022 (accessed 31 October 2024).

¹⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3. Australia is home to 13.5 GW of installed onshore wind farms, though it is estimated that twice the amount of current wind capacity will be required by 2030 to meet electricity demand.

- 1.21 The potential new Australian offshore wind industry is developing, with a regulatory framework and industry development plan set to ensure that the industry is created in a coordinated way.¹⁸
- 1.22 It is estimated the deployment of offshore wind will create 8000 new jobs annually for Australian workers from 2031.¹⁹
- 1.23 Geoscience Australia explained that offshore wind turbines are either fixed bottom support structures (in shallow waters of up to 70 metres deep) or floating turbines (in deeper water areas). Fixed bottom wind turbines will be anchored into the seabed.²⁰

Offshore wind priority areas

- 1.24 In August 2022, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy (the minister), identified six priority regions with the potential to support an offshore wind industry and which would be considered through a declaration process under the OEI Act. The following regions have been declared suitable for development:
- off Gippsland, Victoria (Vic);
 - Pacific Ocean off Hunter, New South Wales (NSW);
 - Southern Ocean off west coast Vic;
 - Pacific Ocean off Illawarra, NSW;
 - Bass Strait off northern Tasmania (Tas); and
 - Indian Ocean off Bunbury, Western Australia (WA).²¹
- 1.25 Chapter 2 discusses the community consultations undertaken in each of these regions by DCCEEW to inform the declaration process.
- 1.26 The priority regions have been identified due to their strong consistent winds, proximity to existing grid infrastructure, electricity demand, and proximity to port facilities. These areas have also been identified to have industry interest and state government support.²²
- 1.27 According to DCCEEW, these projects 'represent around \$100 billion of potential investment and thousands of jobs'.²³

¹⁸ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Global Wind Energy Council, [Global Wind Report 2024](#), 16 April 2024, p. 104.

²⁰ Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 5.

²¹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 4.

²² DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 4.

²³ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 4.

- 1.28 The declaration process for each of the regions has been undertaken consecutively, and each zone is at varying stages of the process from area identification to licence awarding.
- 1.29 DCCEEW explained that the declaration of an area is the first step in the regulatory process, and informs where individual projects may be considered in future. Details about the merits of different types of offshore wind projects would not be known at the declaration stage of the process.²⁴
- 1.30 Community consultation occurs at multiple stages of the project process, including consultation initially undertaken by the Australian Government in Stage 1 when an area is proposed to be declared suitable for offshore renewable energy, then by developers in Stages 2 and 3 when developing management plans for feasibility licences and commercial licences and subsequently when implementing stakeholder engagement strategies described in approved management plans. Management plans are to be approved by the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator before an activity can commence.²⁵
- 1.31 The AEIC has prepared and published guidance for the offshore wind industry to assist with community engagement for the post-declaration period.²⁶
- 1.32 Further detail on the process, and the consultation process undertaken for the six identified priority areas, is contained in the following chapter.
- 1.33 Table 1.1 provides an overview of key statistics regarding the six priority areas.²⁷

Table 1.1 Key statistics about the six priority areas

Area	Declared area maximum size (km ²)	Potential power generation (GW)	Potential jobs	Status at 26 May 2025
Gippsland, Vic	15 000	25	15 000 (construction), 7500 ongoing	Feasibility licences granted
Hunter, NSW	1854	5.2	3120 (construction), 1560 ongoing	Feasibility licence offered

²⁴ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 4–5.

²⁵ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 16.

²⁶ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC), [Considerations for Offshore Wind Industry on Community Engagement](#) (accessed 31 October 2024).

²⁷ DCCEEW, [Australia's offshore wind areas](#) (accessed 13 January 2025).

Southern Ocean, west coast Vic	1030	2.9	1740 (construction), 870 ongoing	Feasibility licence granted
Illawarra, NSW	1022	2.9	1740 (construction), 870 ongoing	Feasibility licence application window has closed
Bass Strait, northern Tas	7104	20	12 000 (construction), 6000 ongoing	Feasibility licence application window has closed
Bunbury, WA	3995	11.4	7000 (construction), 3500 ongoing	Feasibility licence application window has closed

2023 review of community engagement with renewable energy projects

1.34 In July 2023, the minister commissioned the AEIC to conduct a review of community engagement with the planning, development and operation of renewable energy infrastructure.²⁸ The review was led by then-Commissioner Mr Andrew Dyer, with the report provided to the Australian Government in December 2023 and published in February 2024.²⁹

1.35 The review noted that the renewable energy transition for Australia to achieve its emissions targets would require 'a highly decentralised portfolio of generation assets and accompanying transmission lines, compared to our centralised coal generation portfolio'. This would mean that more communities would be impacted by prospecting and development of new renewable energy generation projects. The review further stated that many communities would also benefit from being part of the energy transition.³⁰

1.36 The review considered community attitudes toward:

- renewable energy infrastructure;
- community experiences of engagement with private developers on renewable energy projects; and
- community views on the role of governments at the Commonwealth, state and territory and local levels in improving community engagement.³¹

²⁸ DCCEEW, [Community Engagement Review](#) (accessed 23 October 2024).

²⁹ DCCEEW, [Community Engagement Review](#) (accessed 24 January 2025).

³⁰ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, [Community Engagement Review Report](#), December 2023, pp. 1–2.

³¹ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023.

- 1.37 The review also considered perceived or actual environmental impacts of renewable energy infrastructure across agricultural land, and Indigenous heritage and land rights.³²
- 1.38 The review received over 500 submissions and over 250 survey responses and conducted over 75 meetings with over 700 attendees, in which landholders and community members living near proposed sites for renewable energy and new transmission infrastructure participated.³³
- 1.39 The report provided advice on maximising community engagement and benefit in the lifecycle of renewable energy infrastructure. While the report addressed renewable energy infrastructure broadly, in relation to offshore wind farm developments it mentioned that the review observed 'strong support...for programs that have controls to select developers to prospect and develop specified projects in a specific area'.³⁴

Themes and trends identified through the review

- 1.40 The review identified six key themes:

- achieving best practice and selecting reputable developers;
- reducing unnecessary community engagement, avoiding the selection of poor and inappropriate sites;
- re-engineering planning and environmental assessments and approvals to reduce consultation fatigue;
- ensuring best practice complaint handling;
- community education to enhance understanding of the need for the transition to renewable energy; and
- engaging communities to identify opportunities and enable sustainable benefit sharing.³⁵

- 1.41 Community groups highlighted the risk of consultation fatigue, which can arise as multiple developers investigate projects within the same area.³⁶ The review found that:

- 'poor engagement practices [by proponents] experienced by landholders and community members have led to a material distrust of project developers' and in particular, the developers of 'new, long-distance transmission projects and prospective electricity generation projects along the proposed routes'; and

³² Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, pp. 63–64.

³³ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 8.

³⁴ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 15.

³⁵ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 5.

³⁶ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 12.

- noted a lack of a formal scheme to rate or assess the 'track record and capability in community engagement' of developers.³⁷
- 1.42 The review also stated that many developers' engagement personnel and management lack the skills, experience and knowledge to meet community expectations of engagement.³⁸
 - 1.43 First Nations people emphasised the need for cultural change within the sector, early and constructive engagement, and appropriate cultural awareness training.³⁹
 - 1.44 Further, the First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee sought 'collaborative, transparent top-down planning processes' with greater appreciation for First Nations peoples' tangible and intangible connection to land. The advisory committee stated that land rights can be perceived as a threat rather than an opportunity.⁴⁰
 - 1.45 During the review, frustrations were expressed at the time taken for a proposed project to progress through the planning process, often leading to uncertainty about whether a project would proceed.⁴¹ Community members expressed frustration about short consultation timeframes when compared to the extended timeframes provided for developer responses.⁴²
 - 1.46 Participants expressed the need for an overarching national narrative on the need for the energy transition, which would allow for active engagement from communities in shaping and benefiting from the energy transition. Emphasis was placed on the lack of clarity around the plan to transition, and concern for communities set to host large numbers of projects and their cumulative impacts.⁴³
 - 1.47 Participants outlined a lack of belief in large-scale renewable energy projects generating benefits to local communities, with many expressing concerns that their communities would be worse off after the development activity concluded.⁴⁴

³⁷ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 8.

³⁸ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 8.

³⁹ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 22.

⁴¹ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 27.

⁴² Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 28.

⁴³ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, pp. 38–39.

⁴⁴ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, pp. 47–48.

Recommendations contained in the review

- 1.48 The review made nine recommendations, which the Australian Government ultimately accepted in full or in principle.⁴⁵
- 1.49 The review acknowledged that most of the recommendations would require collaboration with state and territory governments to implement.⁴⁶
- 1.50 The review recommended:
- (1) an independent body or person to design and operate a developer rating scheme which provides transparent ratings for developers' engagement performance and capability;⁴⁷
 - (2) improved, coordinated Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdiction planning for the development of new generation and transmission projects, whereby a developer is required to bid or apply to prospect and develop a project at a particular site or location;⁴⁸
 - (3) states and territories to support and expedite sourcing information necessary for contemporary land use planning in order to improve community engagement through land use planning, site selection and transparency;⁴⁹
 - (4) to progress, complete and expedite the deployment of process reforms contemplated by the jurisdictions, to improve processes and reduce the time involved in the project process;⁵⁰
 - (5) state governments to establish a new ombudsman to handle complaints relating to renewable energy generation, large-scale storage and new transmission infrastructure;⁵¹
 - (6) improved communication with local communities, which provides a clear narrative about the pragmatic reasons for the energy transition;⁵²

⁴⁵ The Australian Government's initial response to the review was published in February 2024, and the final response from the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (ECMC) was published in July 2024.

⁴⁶ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. i.

⁴⁷ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 21.

⁵⁰ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 27.

⁵¹ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 31.

⁵² Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 37.

- (7) the Commonwealth to work with state and territory governments to review and/or implement oversight governance arrangements for transition projects of national significance;⁵³
- (8) improved coordination of opportunities for local benefits and economic development, including for First Nations peoples and their enterprises;⁵⁴ and
- (9) state, territory and local governments to proactively identify opportunities for the local community.⁵⁵

Australian Government response to the review

- 1.51 The Australian Government's initial response, in February 2024, accepted in principle the review's recommendations, and noted that the implementation of the recommendations would be shared across governments.⁵⁶
- 1.52 The Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (ECMC) released the full response to the review in July 2024, and agreed to four recommendations (Recommendations 4, 6, 8 and 9) and agreed in principle to the remaining recommendations (Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7) which would require further consideration.⁵⁷
- 1.53 In principle agreement was provided for the recommendation relating to the establishment of a developer rating scheme (Recommendation 1), and the ECMC noted that the 2024–25 Commonwealth Budget had allocated funding over two years for this. The Commonwealth will lead the design and development of this rating system.⁵⁸ DCCEEW stated in November 2024 that it was working on the developer rating scheme through a consultative body which includes members of the clean energy sector and involves employee and business representatives to design the benchmarks to be used. Work is also being undertaken to develop the governance models relating to consultation practices within communities and 'around the bona fides of the organisation', including how well equipped an organisation might be to deliver on their projects.⁵⁹

⁵³ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 47.

⁵⁵ Mr Andrew Dyer, AEIC, *Community Engagement Review Report*, December 2023, p. 47.

⁵⁶ DCCEEW, [Initial Australian Government Response to the Community Engagement Review](#), February 2024, p. 1.

⁵⁷ ECMC, [ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review](#), July 2024, p. 3.

⁵⁸ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Mr Simon Duggan, Deputy Secretary, DCCEEW, *Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Proof Hansard*, 4 November 2024, p. 88.

- 1.54 The recommendation relating to coordination of planning of new generation and transmission projects (Recommendation 2) was also given in principle agreement. Ministers noted significant ongoing work already underway across Australia to support efficient planning and delivery, and also noted that jurisdictions have adopted planning approaches tailored for their particular requirements.⁶⁰
- 1.55 Recommendation 3, relating to improvement to community engagement through land use planning, site selection and transparency, was agreed in principle, with the ministers noting the work undertaken by the jurisdictions.⁶¹
- 1.56 Recommendation 5, relating to the establishment of an ombudsman, was supported in principle. Ministers agreed with the intent of the recommendation, but stated that this would 'be addressed through enhancing the capabilities of existing structures, rather than the establishment of new regulatory bodies'. It was noted that state and territory governments were adopting or exploring options for complaint resolution mechanisms focused on the energy sector.⁶²
- 1.57 In principle agreement was also provided for the recommendation relating to the implementation of oversight governance arrangements for transition projects of national significance (Recommendation 7). Current initiatives to strengthen governance and oversight across jurisdictions were noted, as was the continuing work on the draft Nationally Significant Transmission Project (NSTP) framework. The NSTP is intended to 'provide a basis for Commonwealth and state and territory governments to make joint decisions on priority transmission projects, and to establish mechanisms for co-ordination and collaboration to address challenges affecting delivery of these projects'.⁶³
- 1.58 The ECMC response acknowledged that the impact of energy transformation would vary across communities, and stated that the review's recommendations should be 'adapted to fit the unique contexts of each region'.⁶⁴ The response further stated that 'reforming the energy system is a long-term challenge', and that 'Ministers are committed to continuously identifying and addressing new challenges as they arise'. Working Groups of the National Energy Transformation Partnership (NETP), which reports to the ECMC, were highlighted, demonstrating continuous commitment to the matters raised in the review.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 10.

⁶¹ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 11.

⁶² ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 15.

⁶³ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 19.

⁶⁴ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 7.

⁶⁵ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 7.

- 1.59 The ECMC response noted the development of national guidelines for community engagement and benefits for electricity transmission projects, which are in train in collaboration with state and territory jurisdictions through the Transmission Working Group under the NETP.⁶⁶

CSIRO research into low-conflict pathways for renewable energy development

- 1.60 In July 2024, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) Responsible Innovation Future Science Platform released research into low conflict pathways to enable the development of renewable energy, including offshore renewable energy, using the Bass Strait proposed area consultation as a case study.⁶⁷
- 1.61 The first stage of the study included a stakeholder survey of the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind area to identify the level of awareness and interest, and the strength of opinions and attitudes as well as information gaps.⁶⁸

Stakeholder survey results

- 1.62 The study's stakeholder survey found that there is a 'relatively low level of conflict around the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind farm zone', with the exception of commercial fishers who reported 'strong negative attitudes with concerns centred around the perceived impact of offshore wind farms on livelihoods'.⁶⁹
- 1.63 Members of the public were concerned over visual amenity, reduced access, and impacts on migratory species. Environmental groups supported the benefits of renewable energy, but were concerned over personal, cultural, environmental and place-based impacts.⁷⁰
- 1.64 A significant communication gap was identified, with limited access to relevant information and a low level of community engagement. A lack of transparency

⁶⁶ ECMC, *ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review*, July 2024, p. 15.

⁶⁷ Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), [Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone](#), 1 July 2024.

⁶⁸ Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, CSIRO, *Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone*, 1 July 2024, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, CSIRO, *Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone*, 1 July 2024, p. 54.

⁷⁰ Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, CSIRO, *Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone*, 1 July 2024, p. 54.

in decision making was also identified. CSIRO stated that the lack of awareness of the proposal and lack of clarity had created a perception gap:

The general lack of reliable information has also contributed to a perception gap between what an individual thinks is happening and what is actually happening. Given the relatively low levels of stakeholder certainty and the current reliance on social media and personal information networks, it is anticipated that without a targeted information campaign, this gap will continue to widen.⁷¹

- 1.65 The study reported that all stakeholder groups recommended the need for marine spatial planning, and more integrated planning which considers the combined impact of onshore and offshore wind farm development.⁷²
- 1.66 The next stages of the study will include an analysis of broadcast and online media and other internet data. Finally, the study will include the development of a social network model to simulate community and stakeholder attitudes including the role of the media and 'key tipping points'.⁷³ The remaining stages of the study are in train, with the project set to conclude by June 2025.⁷⁴

Next chapter

- 1.67 The next chapter provides an overview of the consultation process, and the status of the consultation process underway in the six priority areas. Chapter 2 also provides an overview of the legislative framework for offshore wind.

⁷¹ Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, CSIRO, *Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone*, 1 July 2024, p. 54.

⁷² Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, CSIRO, *Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone*, 1 July 2024, p. 54.

⁷³ Corrine Condie, Jess Melbourne-Thomas, Scott Spillias, Matthew Andreotta and Scott Condie, CSIRO, *Low Conflict Pathways to Renewable Energy: Stakeholder attitudes to the proposed Bass Strait offshore wind energy zone*, 1 July 2024, p. 6.

⁷⁴ CSIRO, [*Low conflict pathways to renewable energy: using predictive models to reduce social risk*](#), 20 December 2023 (accessed 22 January 2025).

Chapter 2

Overview of the offshore wind industry consultation process

Overview

- 2.1 This chapter provides an overview of the consultation process undertaken by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in relation to proposed offshore wind areas. This chapter contains information on:
- the regulatory framework for offshore wind, focusing on public consultation opportunities; and
 - the status of the consultation process undertaken in each of the offshore wind priority areas.

Legislative framework for offshore wind

- 2.2 Offshore renewable energy infrastructure is regulated by the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act) and associated regulations.¹ The OEI Act enables the construction, installation, commissioning, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of offshore electricity infrastructure within the Commonwealth offshore area.² DCCEEW stated that Australia's marine waters are used for a range of recreational or commercial activities, and that the OEI Act 'operates under the principle of shared use of the offshore marine environment and aims to balance competing interests'.³
- 2.3 Under the OEI Act, the Minister for Climate Change and Energy (the minister) is responsible for all licensing decisions, including declaration of area suitability. The Offshore Infrastructure Registrar is responsible for administering the licensing scheme, including maintaining a register of licences and making

¹ DCCEEW, [Legislation and regulations](#) (accessed 2 October 2024). The *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act) regulates infrastructure including offshore wind and solar farms, wave energy plants and undersea electricity interconnectors. See: Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, [Legislative framework](#) (accessed 29 August 2024).

² Leah Ferris and Liz Kenny, *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill 2021 and Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Regulatory Levies) Bill 2021*, *Bills Digest No. 27*, 2021–22, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2021, pp. 5–6; Parliament of Australia, [Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill 2021](#) (accessed 2 October 2024). Commonwealth waters extend from three nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline to the boundary of Australia's exclusive economic zone, 200 nautical miles. See: Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, [Legislative framework](#) (accessed 29 August 2024).

³ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

recommendations to the minister.⁴ The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (the regulator) is responsible for overseeing the operational aspects of an offshore renewable energy project, including work health and safety, infrastructure integrity, and environmental management of offshore renewable energy infrastructure.⁵

- 2.4 Officials from the regulator were invited by DCCEEW to participate in a series of community drop-in sessions in relation to the proposed declaration of an area off Bunbury, Western Australia, in March 2024. The regulator stated that the purpose of its involvement was to build an understanding of the regulator's roles and responsibilities under the OEI Act and to share information about offshore renewables regulation.⁶
- 2.5 The OEI Act operates alongside existing legislation including the *Native Title Act 1993*, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), and the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*.⁷
- 2.6 Geoscience Australia also plays a role in the development of an offshore wind industry by providing data, information, services and advice. Geoscience Australia stated that it supports the consultation process led by DCCEEW by updating the Australian Marine Spatial Information System (AM SIS) to support ministerial announcements about renewable energy areas. Officials from Geoscience Australia also attended community engagement sessions in four of the six priority areas to demonstrate digital decision-support tools.⁸
- 2.7 Geoscience Australia also delivers marine geoscience information through digital portals.⁹

Overview of the offshore renewable energy development process

- 2.8 DCCEEW set out the process for the development of offshore renewable energy (see Figure 2.1). In summary, the process is separated into three stages, each of which contains built-in opportunities for public feedback:
 - Stage 1—initial consultation led by DCCEEW and regional zoning, with no construction able to take place;
 - Stage 2—project proposals, feasibility studies and approvals, with no construction able to take place during this stage. Stage 2 involves environmental impact assessments and other approvals, as well as

⁴ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, [Legislative framework](#) (accessed 29 August 2024).

⁵ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, [What we do](#) (accessed 24 May 2024).

⁶ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 3.

⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 14.

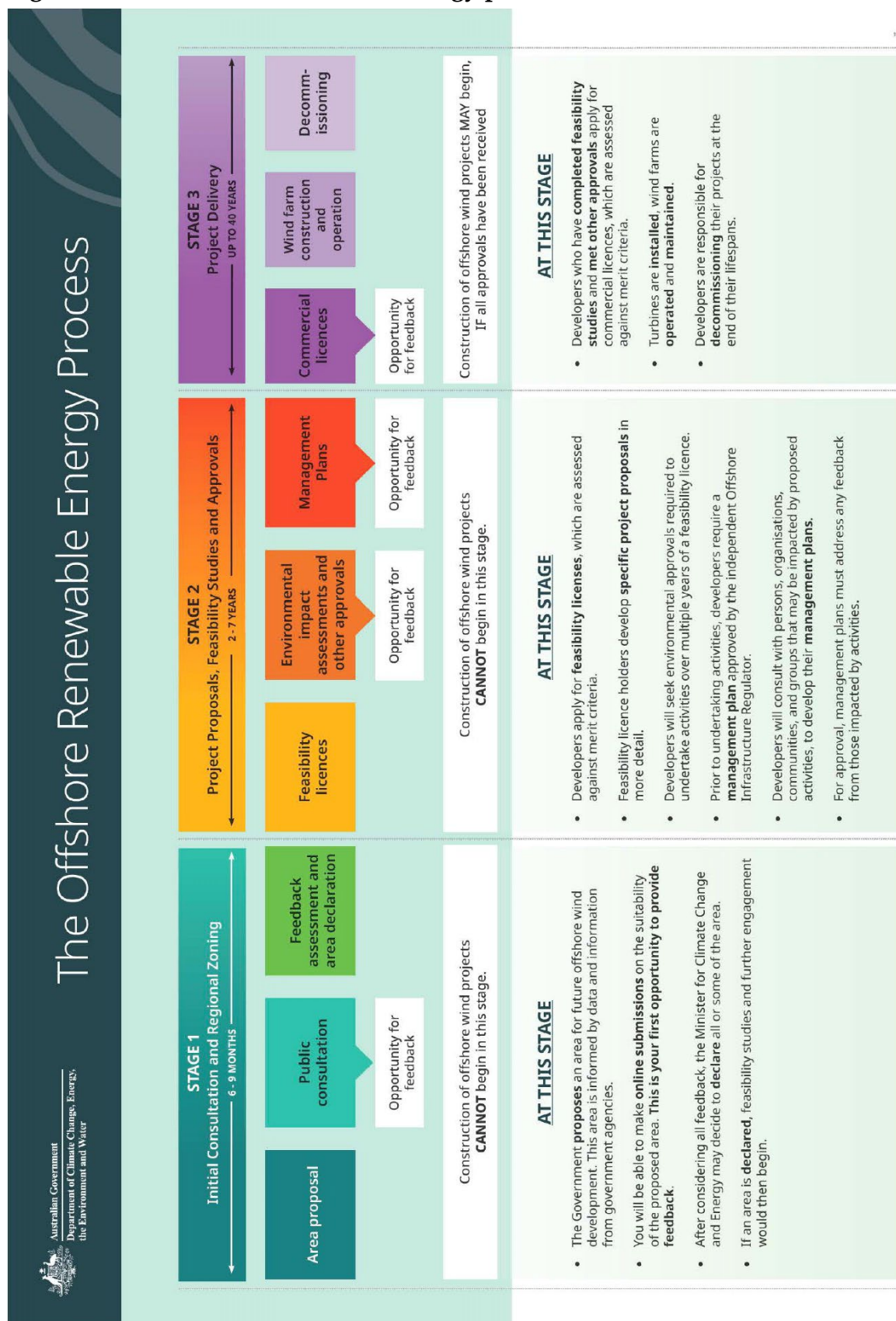
⁸ Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

⁹ Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

management plans, and includes requirements for consultation on project-specific elements; and

- Stage 3—project delivery, including the construction and operation of the project and the decommissioning at the end of the lifecycle, including consultation on commercial licence arrangements.

Figure 2.1 The offshore renewable energy process



Source: DCCCEW, Submission 61, p. 28.

Stage 1—initial consultation and regional zoning

- 2.9 The OEI Act specifies that public consultation is required to inform the minister's decision on the suitability of an area for offshore renewable energy infrastructure.¹⁰ The minister must also consult the Defence Minister and the minister administering part of the *Navigation Act 2012*.¹¹
- 2.10 Before an offshore renewable energy infrastructure project can be considered, the minister must declare an area suitable. If the minister proposes to declare an area, a notice must be published on DCCEEW's website. The notice must:
- outline the area proposed for declaration;
 - invite submissions from the public;
 - specify how submissions are to be made;
 - specify when submissions must be made by, providing at least a 60-day consultation period; and
 - include any other information deemed appropriate by the minister.¹²
- 2.11 Feedback provided through submissions informs the minister's decision on whether to declare an area as suitable for offshore renewable energy developments.¹³
- 2.12 Under the OEI Act, the minister must give consideration to:
- potential impacts of the project lifecycle (from construction to decommissioning) on other marine users and interests;
 - submissions received during the consultation process;
 - advice received in consulting the Defence Minister and the minister administering the relevant section of the *Navigation Act 2012*;
 - Australia's international obligations in the area; and
 - Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.¹⁴
- 2.13 The minister may also have regard to other relevant matters, and may make the declaration subject to conditions if the minister thinks it is appropriate.¹⁵
- 2.14 Geoscience Australia stated that it updates the information on the AMSIS website at the time of announcements on proposed or declared areas to allow for public engagement with accurate information.¹⁶

¹⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 14.

¹¹ OEI Act, para. 17(3)(c).

¹² OEI Act, s. 18.

¹³ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 3.

¹⁴ OEI Act, ss. 19(1).

¹⁵ OEI Act, ss. 19(2)–(3) and s. 20.

¹⁶ Geoscience Australia stated that more than 10 000 users had accessed the AMSIS website's offshore renewable energy pages in 2023–24. Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

Stage 2—project proposals, feasibility studies and approvals

- 2.15 After an area is declared as suitable, applications are opened for organisations to apply for a relevant licence. The OEI Act sets out four types of licences within which offshore renewable energy projects must operate.¹⁷ Each licencing type provides provisions for various stages of offshore renewable energy infrastructure.
- 2.16 The four licencing types are:
- Feasibility licence, authorising the licence holder to assess the feasibility of an offshore renewables project, such as a commercial offshore wind farm. A feasibility licence can last up to seven years, and be extended upon request, however feasibility licences cannot overlap with other licence types.¹⁸
 - Commercial licence, authorising the licence holder to carry out an offshore renewables project, and can be granted for up to 40 years. A commercial licence can only be granted where a feasibility licence was held.¹⁹
 - Research and demonstration licence, authorising the licence holder to research into or carry out demonstration of offshore renewable energy infrastructure. Research and demonstration licences can be granted for up to 10 years.²⁰
 - Transmission and infrastructure licence, authorising the licence holder to store, transmit or convey electricity, which may or may not be renewable energy. In addition, it also authorises licence holders to assess the feasibility of storing, transmitting or conveying electricity.²¹
- 2.17 Feasibility licence holders are required to undertake a variety of studies and investigations; consultations with community, First Nations and broader stakeholders; and work through relevant state and Commonwealth approvals processes to identify any uncertainties or risks and determine whether a full-scale commercial project is viable.²²
- 2.18 The first feasibility licences were awarded in April 2024 for the Gippsland declared area.²³

¹⁷ OEI Act, s. 28.

¹⁸ OEI Act, Ch. 3, Pt. 1, Div. 2.

¹⁹ OEI Act, Ch. 3, Pt. 1, Div. 3.

²⁰ OEI Act, Ch. 3, Pt. 1, Div. 4.

²¹ OEI Act, Ch. 3, Pt. 1, Div. 5.

²² Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

²³ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

- 2.19 State and territory governments are responsible for licensing and regulating projects and associated infrastructure in their coastal waters (less than three nautical miles).²⁴

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

- 2.20 Under the EPBC Act, approvals are required if an action 'has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact on any of the matters of national environmental significance' including the environment of Commonwealth marine areas.²⁵ In these circumstances, offshore wind proponents are required to undertake public consultation, which is a separate requirement to the consultation required under the OEI Act and supporting regulations.²⁶
- 2.21 The EPBC Act mandates public comment periods for referrals and assessments, and consultation methods can include community meetings, letterbox drops, public notices, and sharing project information on the proponent's website.²⁷ Referrals are published on the EPBC Act Public Portal for a 10-business-day public comment period. The Minister for the Environment then considers the result of consultation in determining whether the referred action is a 'controlled action' for the purposes of the EPBC Act.²⁸
- 2.22 Public consultation is also undertaken on any assessment documentation and is usually undertaken by the proponent. There is generally a consultation period of at least 20 days.²⁹
- 2.23 The Minister for the Environment may also offer additional public comment periods if deemed appropriate or necessary.³⁰
- 2.24 The regulator submitted that 'it is highly like that all commercial scale offshore wind projects will be determined to be controlled actions under the EPBC Act and require formal assessment and approval under...that Act'.³¹
- 2.25 Dependent on the location of offshore renewable projects and the nature of activities, projects may be subject to additional Commonwealth approvals, such as the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*.³²

²⁴ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 3.

²⁵ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

²⁶ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 16.

²⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 16.

²⁸ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 17.

²⁹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 17.

³⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 17.

³¹ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

³² Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

- 2.26 Consultation undertaken as part of the EPBC Act assessment process includes consultation with First Nations communities, and should be undertaken in accordance with the interim guidance released by DCCEEW.³³ Engagement with First Nations communities is discussed below.³⁴

Management Plan Requirements

- 2.27 Under the feasibility licence phase in Stage 2 of the offshore renewable energy process, a licence holder wanting to apply for a commercial licence must have a management plan approved by the regulator.³⁵ This occurs before offshore activities, including the construction, installation, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of infrastructure, can proceed.³⁶
- 2.28 Licence holders must lead consultation in preparation for their management plans 'to determine the impacts that the proposed OEI activities may have on co-users of the licence areas and local communities'. The outcome of this consultation process must be documented in the management plan, including mitigation measures for the impacts identified.³⁷
- 2.29 Management plans detail the operational aspects of a project, and should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and 'set out how a licence holder proposes to manage work health and safety, infrastructure integrity and environmental management risks associated with activities proposed to be carried out under an OEI Act licence'.³⁸
- 2.30 A management plan is a legally enforceable document under the OEI Act framework, and is used by the regulator to monitor ongoing compliance. The regulator may take enforcement action to ensure compliance with relevant requirements and obligations, that activities are being carried out safely, and to drive continuous improvement.³⁹

³³ DCCEEW, [*Interim Engaging with First Nations People and Communities on Assessments and Approvals under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*](#), 2023.

³⁴ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 17.

³⁵ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

³⁶ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 5.

³⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 16.

³⁸ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, [*Management plans*](#) (accessed 23 January 2025).

³⁹ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, [*Management plans*](#) (accessed 28 January 2025).

Stage 3—project delivery

- 2.31 During Stage 3, eligible developers can apply for commercial licences and undertake public consultation. This stage sees the construction of offshore wind projects, subject to approvals being received.⁴⁰
- 2.32 DCCEEW considered that best practice consultation requires ongoing consultation with affected persons throughout the life of an OEI licence, which should be supported by appropriate information. Ongoing consultation should be conducted according to a stakeholder engagement strategy.⁴¹

Consultation process for the six offshore wind priority areas—Stage 1

- 2.33 The declaration process for the six priority regions listed in Chapter 1 has been undertaken consecutively. DCCEEW stated that the purpose of public consultation for each of the proposed declaration areas was:
- ...to inform the community about the proposal that had been announced and the details of the submissions process, as well as deepen the Government's understanding of how any future infrastructure may impact nearby communities, and other users of the space.⁴²
- 2.34 This section provides an overview of the consultation process underway in the six priority areas identified by the minister in August 2022.
- 2.35 Each area's Consultation Hub webpage, hosted on the [DCCEEW website](#), includes unique information to the area, with resources providing the community with additional information on the proposal, including:
- notice of proposal;
 - overview of the proposed area;
 - supporting information for the region;
 - marine users and interests;
 - frequently asked questions; and
 - interactive map of the proposed area.⁴³
- 2.36 In each of the six priority areas, the required written submission process undertaken by DCCEEW in line with the OEI Act was augmented by information relating to the consultation process and community sessions disseminated on the DCCEEW website, social media channels (X, Facebook,

⁴⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 28. Additional Commonwealth approval requirements will depend upon the nature and location of activities. This may include requirements under the *Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981* and the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*.

⁴¹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 16.

⁴² DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 4.

⁴³ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 5.

Instagram and LinkedIn), radio and newspaper advertisements, and pamphlets distributed to residents' letterboxes.⁴⁴

- 2.37 Each consultation process received a varying degree of media attention in the respective areas, increasing the dissemination of information more widely through regional and national newspapers and websites.⁴⁵
- 2.38 In addition to accepting written submissions from the public, DCCEEW also undertook drop-in consultation sessions. The format of these sessions did not include a formal structure or presentation, and community members were able to have individual and small group discussions with government representatives.⁴⁶
- 2.39 DCCEEW also held online and in-person targeted sessions providing local industries the chance to ask questions and deepen their knowledge of the proposal.⁴⁷
- 2.40 DCCEEW noted that all areas garnered a mix of feedback putting forward both opposing and supporting views on offshore wind projects.⁴⁸

Gippsland, Victoria

- 2.41 Public consultation was undertaken from 5 August to 7 October 2022, beginning with the publication of the Notice of Proposal for the area off Gippsland. Six open house sessions were held throughout this period from 29 August to 1 September 2022. DCCEEW stated that more than 500 people attended these sessions. Additionally, five online sessions were held specifically for relevant local stakeholders between 17 and 25 August 2022.⁴⁹
- 2.42 DCCEEW officials engaged with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Boon Wurrung Foundation during the proposal of the declared area. After the declaration of the Gippsland area in December 2022, DCCEEW engaged with

⁴⁴ DCCEEW, [Offshore Renewable Energy Declaration: Gippsland, Victoria—Public Consultation Summary Report](#), p. 3.

⁴⁵ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 13.

⁴⁹ DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024); DCCEEW, [Offshore Renewable Energy Declaration: Gippsland, Victoria—Public Consultation Summary Report](#), p. 4.

other Traditional Owner organisations and sought comments on 'how granting feasibility licences might affect native title rights and interests'.⁵⁰

- 2.43 A total of 765 submissions to the department's Gippsland consultation process were received which set out concerns regarding environmental impacts, visual amenity, recreational and commercial fishing, onshore impacts, and shipping impacts. Submissions were also supportive of the development of the offshore wind industry, potential benefits to the local economy, and transitioning to clean renewable energy.⁵¹
- 2.44 After considering the community feedback, in December 2022, the minister declared a revised area as suitable covering 15 000 km² from Lakes Entrance to south of Wilsons Promontory. The Australian Government has subsequently granted 12 feasibility licences for offshore wind projects in this area.⁵²
- 2.45 Responding to community feedback, the minister declared a smaller area than originally proposed (a reduction of 45.45 per cent), and gave consideration to concerns regarding visual amenity.⁵³ The declaration of a smaller area was designed to avoid an environmentally significant area as a precautionary measure, being a probable migration path for the Orange-Bellied Parrot.⁵⁴
- 2.46 In addition, the declaration instrument issued in December 2022 places conditions on feasibility licence holders to ensure that future consultation undertaken by proponents includes fishing stakeholders during the preparation of management plans.⁵⁵
- 2.47 Feasibility licence holders are also required to consult with various Commonwealth agencies, including the Department of Defence, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), and with the titleholders of any existing petroleum or greenhouse gas titles issued under

⁵⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 7. DCCEEW consulted Flinders Island Aboriginal Association; Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre; Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation; First Nations Legal and Research Services; Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council; Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association; and Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania.

⁵¹ DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁵² DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁵³ The proposed area maximum size was 27 500 km². DCCEEW, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025).

⁵⁴ DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁵⁵ DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025). The instrument requires licence holders to consult with concession holders under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* (Cth) or licence holders under the *Fisheries Act 1995* (Vic) or nominated representative organisations in preparing a management plan for the licence.

the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* whose title area overlaps with the licence area.⁵⁶

- 2.48 Feasibility licence holders are delivering community engagement events in March 2025.⁵⁷

Hunter, New South Wales

- 2.49 Public consultation for the Hunter region was undertaken from 23 February to 28 April 2023. Seven open house sessions were held from 6 March to 9 March 2023, with more than 300 attendees. Additionally, six online sessions were held specifically for local stakeholders between 20 to 23 March 2023. More than 45 000 flyers were distributed to households in suburbs and adjacent towns, and paid promotion of the consultation period was undertaken in local newspapers, radio and on social media.⁵⁸
- 2.50 DCCEEW contacted a number of First Nations groups whose country is adjacent to the proposed area. An in-person meeting on-country was held with Biraban Local Aboriginal Land Council in March 2023.⁵⁹
- 2.51 A total of 1916 submissions were received from the Hunter region raising similar concerns relating to environmental impacts, impacts on commercial and recreational fishing, visual amenity, and shipping impacts, as in the Gippsland consultation process. Submissions were also similarly supportive of the development of an offshore wind industry, potential benefits to the local economy, and transitioning to clean renewable energy.⁶⁰
- 2.52 In responding to community feedback, the minister declared a smaller area than originally proposed (a 34.04 per cent reduction).⁶¹ This took account of significant environmental areas including marine parks, addressed concerns regarding visual amenity, avoided fish aggregating devices used for

⁵⁶ DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁵⁷ DCCEEW, [Gippsland, Victoria declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 26 February 2025).

⁵⁸ DCCEEW, [Hunter, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024); DCCEEW, [Offshore Renewable Energy Declaration: Hunter, NSW—Public Consultation Summary Report](#), July 2023, p. 4; DCCEEW *Submission 61*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 8. DCCEEW contacted: Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council; Bahtabah Local Aboriginal Land Council; Biraban Local Aboriginal Land Council; Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council; Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council; Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council; and Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council.

⁶⁰ DCCEEW, [Hunter, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁶¹ The proposed area maximum size was 2811 km². DCCEEW, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025).

recreational fishing, and allowed sufficient space ensuring safe management of shipping.⁶²

- 2.53 In July 2023, the minister declared a revised area as suitable, covering 1854 km² extending from Norah Heads to Port Stephen. The Australian Government has subsequently granted one feasibility licence.⁶³
- 2.54 The consultation process also resulted in the avoidance of significant environmental areas including marine parks, the Shelf Rocky Reef Key Ecological Feature and an area important to the Gould's Petrel around Cabbage Tree Island, and the avoidance of fish aggregating devices used by recreational fishers. Further changes as a result of stakeholder feedback will allow space for the safe management of shipping in the area. The declaration instrument issued in July 2023 also placed conditions such as the restriction of infrastructure height to 260 m and the requirement for future feasibility licence holders to consult with various Commonwealth agencies and representatives of the fishing industry.⁶⁴
- 2.55 A formal offer of a feasibility licence has been made.⁶⁵
- 2.56 The Australian Government is convening a Hunter Wind Industry Committee (HWIC), to be comprised of officials from relevant Commonwealth departments, licence holder, state and local governments, First Nations groups, local industry, workers' representatives and tertiary educational institutions.⁶⁶
- 2.57 The HWIC will meet quarterly, with a forward work program including updates from HWIC members on existing activities which aim to: maximise 'use of local content' and generate employment opportunities within the community; identify opportunities for further actions to build industry capability; and plan and implement work to increase industry capability and increase local content.⁶⁷

Southern Ocean, west coast Victoria

- 2.58 Public consultation for the Southern Ocean region, off the Victorian west coast, was undertaken from 28 June to 31 August 2023. Five community information sessions were held from 1 to 3 August 2023, with more than 700 people attending. Additionally, four online sessions were held specifically for local

⁶² DCCEEW, [Hunter, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁶³ DCCEEW, [Hunter, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁶⁴ DCCEEW, [Hunter, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁶⁵ DCCEEW, [Hunter, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 14 March 2025).

⁶⁶ DCCEEW, [Hunter Wind Industry Committee \(HWIC\) – Terms of reference](#) (accessed 26 May 2025). Further information about the membership of the committee may be found at page 2 of the HWIC's terms of reference.

⁶⁷ DCCEEW, [Hunter Wind Industry Committee \(HWIC\) – Terms of reference](#) (accessed 26 May 2025).

stakeholders between 9 to 17 August 2023.⁶⁸ Paid promotion of the consultation was undertaken in local newspapers, radio and social media, with flyers distributed to more than 47 000 households in suburbs and adjacent towns.⁶⁹

- 2.59 DCCEEW officials engaged with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Burrendies Aboriginal Corporation, holding in-person and online meetings. This consultation occurred in collaboration with the Victorian and South Australian Governments. After the declaration of the area, the National Indigenous Australians Agency recommended engaging with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC). DCCEEW initiated engagement with WTOAC as part of the minister's consideration of feasibility licence applications in August 2024.⁷⁰
- 2.60 A total of 3285 submissions were received which raised concerns similar to those raised in other areas' consultation processes, and similarly, submissions which were supportive.⁷¹
- 2.61 In March 2024 the minister declared a revised area as suitable, covering 1030 km² extending from Warrnambool to Port Fairy (a reduction of 79.93 per cent).⁷² The Australian Government has subsequently granted one feasibility licence.⁷³
- 2.62 Further outcomes from the public consultation process included environmental protections, such as avoiding the Key Ecological Feature, the Bonney coast upswelling, and including a buffer zone to protect threatened marine life, migratory seabirds and cetaceans. The declared area also avoids major commercial fishing grounds and excludes an area of cultural significance to First Nations groups. Space has also been made for the safe management of shipping in the area.
- 2.63 The declaration instrument, issued in March 2024, places conditions on future feasibility holders to consult with the Department of Defence and the AMSA, and with representatives of the fishing industry.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean region off Victoria, declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024); DCCEEW, [Offshore Renewable Energy Declaration: Southern Ocean Region, Victoria and South Australia—Public Consultation Submissions Summary Report](#), pp. 4 and 5.

⁶⁹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 9.

⁷¹ DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean region off Victoria, declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁷² The proposed area maximum size was 5132 km². DCCEEW, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025).

⁷³ DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean region off Victoria, declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁷⁴ DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean region off Victoria, declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025); Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Declared Area OEI-01-2024) Declaration 2024, s. 6.

- 2.64 A formal offer of a feasibility licence has been made.⁷⁵
- 2.65 Similarly to the Hunter, the Australian Government is convening a Southern Ocean Wind Industry Committee (SOWIC), to be comprised of a similar membership as the HWIC and to meet quarterly on a similar forward work plan.⁷⁶

Illawarra, New South Wales

- 2.66 Public consultation for the Illawarra region was undertaken from 14 August to 15 November 2023. Several community drop-in sessions were held from 18 to 21 September 2023. Additionally, five online sessions were held specifically for local stakeholders between 4 to 14 September 2023.⁷⁷ The public consultation period was extended (from 16 October to 15 November 2023) after significant community interest and social media campaigns argued that the period was too short.⁷⁸
- 2.67 Advertising was undertaken through newspapers, radio and social media, and flyers were distributed to more than 157 000 homes which encouraged submissions to the consultation process. Six community information sessions were held, which were attended by more than 1270 community members. Five sessions were held with industry stakeholders, with approximately 40 attendees.⁷⁹
- 2.68 Additionally, Ms Alison Byrnes MP, the Federal Member for Cunningham, arranged two public meetings with a panel of experts in October 2023. DCCEEW staff attended these meetings to answer questions.⁸⁰
- 2.69 DCCEEW raised concerns about the propagation of misleading information in the Illawarra:

The proposed area off the Illawarra gained more attention across traditional media platforms and social media than previous offshore renewable energy area proposals. Much of the reporting did not accurately reflect the purpose of the area declaration proposal or the consultation process.

⁷⁵ DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean region off Victoria, declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 3 March 2025).

⁷⁶ DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean region off Victoria, declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 26 May 2025). Information about the membership of the SOWIC can be found at pages 1–2 of the SOWIC Terms of reference. DCCEEW, [Southern Ocean Wind Industry Committee \(SOWIC\) – Terms of reference](#) (accessed 26 May 2025).

⁷⁷ DCCEEW, *Illawarra, NSW declared offshore wind area* (accessed 29 October 2024); DCCEEW, [Offshore Renewable Energy Declaration: Pacific Ocean off the Illawarra region, New South Wales—Public Consultation Summary Report](#), June 2024, pp. 4 and 5.

⁷⁸ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 9.

⁷⁹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 9–10.

⁸⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 10.

The potential visibility and appearance of future offshore wind projects was a common concern. In response to these concerns and some misleading images being circulated online, the department produced and published visualisations showing hypothetical offshore wind turbines in the proposed area from certain vantage points around the Illawarra region.⁸¹

- 2.70 A total of 14 211 submissions were received raising concerns about environmental impacts, particularly for whales and birds, visual amenity, the safe management of shipping, and impacts on commercial and recreational fishing. Submissions were also supportive of developing a local source of clean renewable energy, taking action to address climate change and employment opportunities and potential benefits to the local community and First Nations people from this new industry.⁸²
- 2.71 In June 2024 the minister declared a smaller area than originally proposed, covering 1022 km² extending from Wombarra to Kiama (a reduction of 30.05 per cent).⁸³ At the time of writing the Australian Government is considering applications received for feasibility licences.⁸⁴
- 2.72 In responding to community feedback, the minister declared a smaller area that is 10 km further offshore than originally proposed. This considered the concerns raised by the community during the consultation process.⁸⁵ The declared area also allows space for the safe management of shipping in the area, and avoids significant environmental areas including marine parks, a Biologically Important Area for the Little Penguin, Shelf Rocky Reef Key Ecological Feature and Southern Right Whale migration and reproduction area. Feedback from the consultation on the size of the area was considered, with the declared area 'large enough to support development of offshore wind in the Illawarra'.⁸⁶
- 2.73 Similar conditions on consultation to be undertaken by future feasibility licence holders were included in the declaration instrument, issued in June 2024.⁸⁷ A height restriction of 260 m was also placed on offshore renewable energy infrastructure. Future feasibility licence holders are also required to consult with various Commonwealth agencies, and with the titleholders of any existing

⁸¹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 10.

⁸² DCCEEW, [Illawarra, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁸³ The proposed area maximum size was 1461 km². DCCEEW, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025).

⁸⁴ DCCEEW, [Illawarra, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁸⁵ DCCEEW, [Illawarra, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

⁸⁶ DCCEEW, [Illawarra, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁸⁷ Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Declared Area OEI-02-2024) Declaration 2024, s. 6.

petroleum or greenhouse gas titles issued under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* whose title area overlaps with the licence area.⁸⁸

Bass Strait, northern Tasmania

- 2.74 Public consultation for the Bass Strait region off the coast of northern Tasmania was undertaken from 24 October 2023 to 31 January 2024. Several community drop-in sessions were held from 4 to 7 December 2023 and 23 to 24 January 2024, with 220 attendees. Additionally, specific industry stakeholders were invited to attend online information sessions between 11 and 15 December 2023.⁸⁹ Paid promotion of the consultation period was undertaken in local newspapers, radio and social media. Flyers were distributed to 35 500 households in suburbs and adjacent towns.⁹⁰
- 2.75 DCCEEW received 270 submissions during its public consultation process, which raised similar concerns and support as other consultation processes.⁹¹
- 2.76 DCCEEW consulted with Traditional Owner organisations that could potentially be impacted by the proposed offshore wind infrastructure, including meeting in person or virtually. DCCEEW officials met with Melythina Tiakana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation; Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania; Land and Sea Aboriginal Corporation Tasmania; and Circular Head Aboriginal Corp. DCCEEW officials also initiated contact with other Tasmanian Aboriginal groups.⁹²
- 2.77 In December 2024, the minister declared a smaller area than originally proposed, covering 7104 km² (a reduction of 29.91 per cent).⁹³ The change to the declared area size reflects feedback provided during the consultation process. In addition, public consultation led to the placement of the declared area further from the shore, allowing the safe management of shipping in the area, reduced overlap with commercial fisheries, and further away from the known pathways of migratory birds. As in the Illawarra public consultation process, the area will

⁸⁸ Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Declared Area OEI-01-2023) Declaration 2023, s. 6.

⁸⁹ DCCEEW, [Bass Strait, Northern Tasmania declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 21 March 2025).

⁹⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 11.

⁹¹ DCCEEW, [Bass Strait, Northern Tasmania declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 28 January 2025).

⁹² DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 11–12. Contact was initiated with these groups: Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association; Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre; Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation; Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance; and Flinders Island Aboriginal Association.

⁹³ The proposed area maximum size was 10 136 km². DCCEEW, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025).

be large enough to support the development of offshore wind in northern Tasmania.⁹⁴

- 2.78 The declaration instrument also places conditions on future feasibility licence holders to consult the Department of Defence in relation to underwater noise monitoring and chartering of infrastructure.⁹⁵

Indian Ocean off Bunbury, Western Australia

- 2.79 Public consultation for the Bunbury region was undertaken from 20 February to 3 May 2024. Five community drop-in sessions were held from 19 to 21 March 2024, with around 1000 attendees. Additionally, several online sessions were held specifically for local stakeholders during the consultation period, including a public online information session on 29 April 2024.⁹⁶
- 2.80 Consultation began prior to the area being proposed, including engagement with the Western Australian Government, local councils, First Nations groups, fishing bodies and business groups. Consultation continued after the announcement of the proposal, and was promoted through social media and other channels.⁹⁷
- 2.81 As fishing is particularly important in the region, DCCEEW arranged additional information sessions with recreational and commercial fishing stakeholders. These sessions were co-organised by representatives of the commercial and recreational fishing peak bodies.⁹⁸
- 2.82 DCCEEW engaged with First Nations organisations, groups and communities in the region in person and virtually, and meetings were held between First Nations groups, DCCEEW and the Western Australian Government. DCCEEW met with the Gnaala Karla Booja Aboriginal Corporation; Karri Karrak Aboriginal Corporation; and Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation.⁹⁹
- 2.83 A total of 2670 submissions were received raising concerns on environmental impacts, particularly for whales, reefs and the seafloor, visual amenity and impacts on commercial and recreational fishing. Submissions were also supportive of a local source of clean renewable energy, action to address climate

⁹⁴ DCCEEW, [Bass Strait, Northern Tasmania declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 28 January 2025).

⁹⁵ Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Declared Area OEI-04-2024) Declaration 2024, s. 6.

⁹⁶ DCCEEW, [Indian Ocean off the Bunbury region, Western Australia declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024); DCCEEW, [Offshore Renewable Energy Declaration: Indian Ocean off the Bunbury Region, Western Australia—Public Consultation Summary Report](#), September 2024, pp. 5 and 6.

⁹⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 12.

⁹⁸ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 12.

⁹⁹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 13.

change, and employment opportunities and potential benefits to the local community and First Nations people from this new industry.¹⁰⁰

- 2.84 In August 2024 the minister declared a smaller area than originally proposed, covering 3995 km² extending between Dawesville and Cape Naturaliste (a reduction of 47.94 per cent).¹⁰¹ The feasibility licence application window closed in January 2025.¹⁰²
- 2.85 In responding to community feedback, the minister declared a significantly smaller area than originally proposed. This gave consideration to concerns raised during the consultation process and removed overlap with recreational and commercial fishing areas by removing more than 60 per cent of the area requested by recreational fishers, including the Naturaliste Reef hotspot. The declared area is also further from the shore, allows space for the safe management of shipping in the area, and is further from whale habitat. The area is also large enough to support the development of the offshore wind industry in Western Australia.¹⁰³
- 2.86 The declaration instrument, issued in August 2024, set conditions on future feasibility licence holders to consult with various Commonwealth agencies and representatives of the fishing industry.¹⁰⁴

Next chapter

- 2.87 Chapter 3 contains views on community engagement in the offshore wind consultation process, including views on the process, timeframes for community engagement and concerns about misinformation and disinformation.

¹⁰⁰ DCCEEW, [Indian Ocean off the Bunbury region, Western Australia declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

¹⁰¹ The proposed area maximum size was 7674 km². DCCEEW, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025).

¹⁰² DCCEEW, [Indian Ocean off the Bunbury region, Western Australia declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 29 October 2024).

¹⁰³ DCCEEW, [Indian Ocean off the Bunbury region, Western Australia declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

¹⁰⁴ Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Declared Area OEI-03-2024) Declaration 2024, s. 6.

Chapter 3

Community engagement with the consultation process

- 3.1 The public consultation process undertaken by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) as part of the development of the potential offshore wind industry generated substantial comment from community members.
- 3.2 As noted in the previous chapters, the process for offshore wind development includes opportunities for public feedback, to inform the Minister for Climate Change and Energy's (the minister) decisions to declare an area suitable. For each of the six priority areas announced in 2022, public consultation has been undertaken (and is ongoing) and has led to reasonably significant changes to the size and boundaries of the declared areas.¹
- 3.3 Significant public engagement occurred in the six priority regions, as outlined in Chapter 2. However, submitters to the inquiry set out a range of concerns with the consultation process undertaken by DCCEEW.²
- 3.4 Submitters to the inquiry indicated that while they were supportive of renewable energy, they held concerns not only about the potential impact of offshore wind energy on the marine environment, but also about the public consultation process undertaken by the Australian Government in relation to the industry's development.
- 3.5 This chapter outlines concerns raised in relation to the consultation process itself, including the timeframes and engagement opportunities available to community members. This chapter also addresses concerns about misinformation and future consultation processes around the ongoing development of the offshore wind industry.
- 3.6 The next chapter sets out views raised through the Australian Government's consultation process relating to the impacts of offshore wind projects on the marine environment, fishing and tourism industries, and noise and light pollution.

Support for the consultation process led by DCCEEW

- 3.7 Submitters noted that the consultation process undertaken by DCCEEW for offshore wind areas was similar to other Australian Government consultation

¹ See Chapter 2; Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), *Submission 61*.

² The consultation process followed in each of the priority areas was outlined in Chapter 2.

processes, and that these processes contain a number of steps and take time. For example the Clean Energy Council (CEC) was supportive of the consultation process undertaken thus far and noted that the consultation process had led to changes, with 'all declared areas being adjusted to incorporate feedback'.³

- 3.8 BlueFloat Energy, an offshore wind project proponent, stated that the consultation process was clear and well structured, and highlighted DCCEEW's efforts to disseminate information through various means online.⁴
- 3.9 Friends of the Earth Australia considered the consultation process to be 'fairly designed and implemented in line with legislation'.⁵ Similarly, Sea Shepherd Australia stated that the consultation process, including timeframes, 'appeared to us to be similar to other consultation processes' and did not experience difficulties in participating, while noting that consultation can always be improved.⁶ Sea Shepherd Australia considered that the public meetings its representatives joined were well-attended by the public, and that 'there was plenty of information available in printed form' which explained the process and which addressed possible community concerns.⁷
- 3.10 The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NSW) submitted that 'there is evidence of adequate consultation opportunities provided in person and online' and noted in some cases the consultation periods were extended in response to community feedback.⁸
- 3.11 The Wollongong City Council was of the view that there were considerable opportunities for the community to engage in the Illawarra consultation, noting the three information sessions organised, and various events including sessions and webinars hosted by potential proponents.⁹
- 3.12 Some submissions from the Hunter region were supportive of the local process undertaken. For example Hunter Workers stated that the consultation was adequate, and in some regards exceeded expectations, noting the efforts undertaken by DCCEEW.¹⁰ The Committee for the Hunter stated that the number of submissions received through the DCCEEW public consultation

³ Clean Energy Council (CEC), *Submission 36*, p. 2.

⁴ BlueFloat Energy, *Submission 11*, p. 1.

⁵ Friends of the Earth Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

⁶ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, pp. 1 and 3.

⁷ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 2.

⁸ Nature Conservation Council of NSW, *Submission 41*, p. 2.

⁹ Wollongong City Council, *Submission 23*, p. 1.

¹⁰ Hunter Workers, *Submission 182*, p. 2.

process for the Hunter area was 'relatively high'.¹¹ The Hunter Jobs Alliance (HJA) stated that DCCEEW had provided 'significant opportunities to engage with the process of offshore wind development', but noted 'there is always room for improvement'.¹²

- 3.13 Similarly, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union considered that the consultation process has been 'sufficient for this stage in the offshore wind process' and noted that future approvals processes would provide further opportunities for engagement.¹³
- 3.14 The Gippsland Climate Change Network expressed that the consultation process has been clear and transparent.¹⁴
- 3.15 The Australian Centre for Culture, Environment, Society and Space (ACCESS), a group of researchers at the University of Wollongong and Deakin University, highlighted the importance of using narratives in each proposed zone to better connect with each community and their needs. For example, in the Gippsland region a narrative centred on industrial job creation appeared to resonate with community members as the 'early and uncoordinated withdrawal of coal-fire power stations' had led to job losses. ACCESS noted that, in the Illawarra, this narrative did not have the same impact, which may have been due to lower regional unemployment rates, and a deep cultural attachment to the ocean.¹⁵

Community concerns about the consultation process

- 3.16 As outlined in the previous chapters, the development of Australia's offshore wind industry allows for public engagement and feedback at each of the three main stages of the development process. The government has been engaging, and continues to engage, on Stage 1 of that process—the regional zoning process. Stage 2 (project proposal, feasibility studies and approvals) and Stage 3 (project delivery) will take place subsequently and will both involve further consultation processes, primarily involving project proponents.
- 3.17 This section first sets out general concerns about the Stage 1 consultation process, before addressing submitters' concerns relating to:
 - the timeframes for and awareness of public engagement;
 - the need for clear information for community members;

¹¹ Committee for the Hunter, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

¹² Hunter Jobs Alliance (HJA), *Submission 33*, p. 1.

¹³ Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, *Submission 45*, pp. 1–2.

¹⁴ Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 1.

¹⁵ Australian Centre for Culture, Environment, Society and Space (ACCESS) University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, pp. 5–6.

- the quality of information and engagement at the public information sessions led by DCCEEW;
 - navigation of the written and online consultation materials; and
 - the complexity around Commonwealth and state jurisdictions and processes.
- 3.18 The Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF) described the consultation process as a 'failure', saying it 'was seen by many as a simple box ticking exercise for DCCEEW' and suggesting that engaging the community in future consultation may be challenging following negative experiences.¹⁶ Recfishwest also considered the consultation process to be a 'failure'.¹⁷
- 3.19 IOH Health submitted that the language used in the consultation process appeared to be a 'sales pitch' to discount risks.¹⁸ The sense of the offshore wind projects being inevitable was repeated in other submissions, including from the Hon Nola Marino MP (Federal Member for Forrest in southwest Western Australia (WA)) and others, and former councillor Mark Croxford from Kiama in NSW.¹⁹
- 3.20 Some submitters refuted DCCEEW's claims about the engagement processes it had undertaken. For example, Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, a tourism charter vessel company based in Port Stephens, stated that despite DCCEEW's claims regarding outreach, it was not aware of any newspaper, radio or social media advertising, nor did any of its 40–60 staff members receive the letterbox drop.²⁰
- 3.21 The Gippsland Climate Change Network explained that the complexity of the proposed offshore wind industry made it difficult for community members to engage with. It suggested that the complexities of the 12 proposed wind farms in the Gippsland area—being presented by 10 different proponents—were exacerbating confusion amongst the community.²¹ It also noted that there can be 'community fatigue'.²²
- 3.22 A series of policy reviews, ongoing policy and regulatory development, and overlapping consultation periods were raised as issues by stakeholders from the

¹⁶ Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF), *Submission 37*, p. 5.

¹⁷ Recfishwest, *Submission 51*, p. 1.

¹⁸ IOH Health, *Submission 44*, p. 1.

¹⁹ The Hon Ms Nola Marino MP, Dr Steve Thomas MLC and Mr Ben Small, *Submission 122*, p. 1; Cr Mark Croxford, *Submission 167*, p. 1.

²⁰ Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, p. 2.

²¹ Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 2.

²² Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 2.

commercial and recreational fishing sector. For example the Commonwealth Fisheries Association stated that:

The regulatory environment for the offshore fishing industry was already crowded and complicated before the government started to enact its offshore renewable energy initiatives. The pace of respective legislative change has been rapid and confusing. Trying to respond to multiple consultation requests has become near impossible with the limited resources that the fishing industry has for a co-ordinated response.²³

- 3.23 Recfishwest also referred to consultation fatigue and noted that offshore wind industry proponents were conducting public information sessions about their own projects (some of which were not located in the proposed area), leading to confusion about the relationship between government and industry.²⁴
- 3.24 Information sessions held by proponents prior to declaration announcements were described as confusing and misleading by the Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative, which stated that these proponent presentations 'were given in a manner that indicated that the proposals were going forward with or without issues raised'.²⁵
- 3.25 Some community members in the Illawarra area reported to ACCESS that they first learnt of plans for an offshore wind industry in their area when an offshore wind proponent began community engagement on a prospective project, prior to the zoning consultation conducted by DCCEEW. ACCESS stated that community members did not have 'a strong understanding of the offshore wind approvals and licensing process, or how it fitted into the government's broader industrial decarbonisation agenda'.²⁶
- 3.26 ACCESS was of the view that concerns raised by community members during the Illawarra consultation process 'were not substantially the result of inadequate consultation conducted by DCCEEW. Rather, they were embedded in the architecture of the legislation'.²⁷

Timeframes for and awareness of public engagement

- 3.27 Some submitters took issue with the time provided for the public consultation process. As noted in the previous chapter, as per the *Offshore Electricity*

²³ Commonwealth Fisheries Association, *Submission 197*, p. 2.

²⁴ Recfishwest, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

²⁵ Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 196*, pp. 2–3.

²⁶ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, p. 6. The need for clear information is discussed below.

²⁷ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, p. 10.

Infrastructure Act 2021 the public consultation period must be at least 60 days from the notice of the proposal to declare an area.²⁸

- 3.28 It was suggested to the committee that this 60-day period was insufficient. Responsible Renewables called for the consultation period to be at least 100 days, to allow communities time to consult and seek guidance on documenting relevant material.²⁹
- 3.29 Hunter Wildlife Rescue submitted that as community consultation is only required from the first stage of the development process, industry and other stakeholders had been involved in discussions for years before community members and environmental groups were consulted. Hunter Wildlife Rescue recommended that community consultation begin earlier and involve frequent and early communication with engineers and designers. It suggested that the gap between consulting industry and community had led to an information vacuum and misinformation.³⁰ This issue is discussed below.
- 3.30 Warrnambool City Council stated that it faced similar challenges in engaging community members and trying to form a position in a limited timeframe:
- Council has no authority or jurisdiction in relation to offshore marine management, however during the consultation process on the proposed offshore renewable energy areas, Council was faced with pressure to form a position on a proposal that we have limited resources to assess or understand from a technical perspective. In addition, the community grappled with understanding the proposal and any impacts on the environment, economy and visual impact.³¹
- 3.31 Similarly, the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) noted the complexity and size of the Bunbury proposed area, and stated that a 60-day consultation period was not sufficient for the commercial fishing industry and community. WAFIC advised that the public consultation period for the Bunbury proposed area coincided with the Australian Government's submission period for the draft regulations, and that consultation on the guidelines for transmission and infrastructure licences within the offshore electricity infrastructure framework commenced shortly after this.³² The Commonwealth Fisheries Association also noted the plethora of regulatory consultation requests placed on the fishing industry.³³

²⁸ *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021*, s. 18.

²⁹ Responsible Renewables, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

³⁰ Hunter Wildlife Rescue, *Submission 47*, p. 3.

³¹ Warrnambool City Council, *Submission 18*, p. 1.

³² Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), *Submission 66*, p. 4. DCCEEW stated that the Bunbury public consultation period was 73 days: see DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 12.

³³ Commonwealth Fisheries Association, *Submission 197*, p. 2.

3.32 The Responsible Renewables Committee Port Stephens Myall Coast summarised its views on the consultation process, suggesting it was 'rushed' and:

...underpinned by poor advertisement of wind zone announcements and consultation sessions, an absence of key information to frame the consultation process, uninformed staff at the consultation sessions, lack of genuine attention to issues raised during the consultation/submissions process, and a poor understanding of community culture, businesses and values.³⁴

3.33 The resources required to participate in public consultation was raised by submitters as an issue. The Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative stated that it was 'overwhelmed by a sudden influx of time-demanding consultations, with no warning and no assistance provided', and also stated that there had been a lack of notice for public information sessions.³⁵

3.34 In describing the consultation process as 'an unmitigated failure', the ARFF said there was low general awareness about the consultation, until community members promoted the consultation period.³⁶

3.35 Some submitters stated that they were not aware of the public consultation process until very late, or, in some cases, too late to participate. Moonshadow—TQC Cruises told the committee that it was only made aware of the process by another operator in the area. Moonshadow—TQC Cruises considered it had insufficient time to research potential impacts of an offshore wind industry in the area.³⁷

Need for clear information

3.36 Several submitters considered that the Australian Government should deepen community engagement and increase knowledge sharing on renewable energy.³⁸

3.37 For instance, although Sea Shepherd Australia expressed support for the consultation process, it noted that the consultation process was in relation to the zoning of offshore wind areas, 'but for many, it was probably the first they had heard about the possibility of [offshore wind projects] and so the process inevitably raised a much wider range of issues'.³⁹

³⁴ Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast, *Submission 9*, p. 1.

³⁵ Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 196*, p. 3.

³⁶ ARFF, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

³⁷ Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, p. 2.

³⁸ See, for example, Parents for Climate, *Submission 49*, p. 3.

³⁹ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 1.

- 3.38 The Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy also highlighted that the offshore wind industry is 'entirely new' to Australians:

It is incredibly challenging for a community to engage meaningfully, if they have no frame of reference or understanding of how the proposed developments are likely to impact them and their region—directly or indirectly—and over a sustained period of time.⁴⁰

- 3.39 The centre considered that because the consultation process did not provide details on future renewable energy infrastructure (as they are determined by future applicants), it 'left some sections of the community feeling like they were being asked to comment on a proposal for which they only had partial details'. This led to an information vacuum which was at times 'filled through misinformation'.⁴¹ Misinformation is discussed below.

- 3.40 ACCESS stated that, although it found DCCEEW staff to be respectful and able to clearly explain the sequencing of the approvals process, the consultation process design could cause issues due to missing key data:

Consistent with recent research on the shortcomings of planning processes that 'breadcrumb' information to affected publics, a lack of key data (such as the visual impacts, environmental impacts and clarity on the use of energy generated) also led to widespread concern.⁴²

- 3.41 The sequencing of consultation was also acknowledged by Surfers for Climate, which noted that as public consultation was carried out prior to the identification of proponents, DCCEEW was not able to provide information regarding projects and the technology which may be used. According to Surfers for Climate, this made it difficult for community members to fully consider the impacts of offshore wind. Surfers for Climate noted that the consultation undertaken so far had been the initial stage, with others to come, but this 'has not always been of sufficient comfort to local communities'.⁴³

- 3.42 Community Power Agency acknowledged that community members were unfamiliar with offshore wind in Australia and required information related to the need for the industry, the associated development processes, and the potential positive and negative impacts. Community Power Agency called for better communication from the Australian Government, including information on the rationale and the standards imposed on offshore wind proponents through legislative and regulatory frameworks.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, p. 3.

⁴¹ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, pp. 3–4.

⁴² ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, pp. 5 and 7.

⁴³ Surfers for Climate, *Submission 73*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Community Power Agency, *Submission 42*, p. 4.

- 3.43 The high-level nature of the information provided by DCCEEW was raised by submitters, including IOH Health, which considered that community members were being asked to consider 'transforming a community space into a heavy industrial zone without thorough information or any consideration of alternatives'.⁴⁵
- 3.44 The Australian Marine Conservation Society was concerned that no information was provided on the ecological values of the Indian Ocean proposed area, or discussion of biodiversity considerations.⁴⁶ No Offshore Wind Farm Zone—Warrnambool and District submitted that a full environmental impact assessment should be undertaken prior to the declaration of an area, in order to build community confidence.⁴⁷
- 3.45 In contrast, Climate Action Newcastle highlighted the resources provided by DCCEEW were useful for community groups and other stakeholders, and noted the visualisations of wind farms at various distances from the shore in order to demonstrate visibility of offshore wind farms in the Illawarra region.⁴⁸
- 3.46 Good for the Gong also supported the use of visualisations, but considered that improvements could be made to the information available, and recommended further information be given on the benefits and standards for offshore wind development. Good for the Gong stated that the Australian Government should act sooner in communicating with the community.⁴⁹

Strong demand for localised, targeted information

- 3.47 Business Hunter facilitated comprehensive local engagement with the consultation process undertaken in the Hunter region, including hosting business forums, providing a submission to the DCCEEW process on behalf of members, sharing information on key milestones, and other activities. Business Hunter stated that as a result of these activities, it had 'observed some confusion over the sequencing and key phases of the project, including opportunities for consultation, and how and when key decisions would be made'.⁵⁰
- 3.48 Several submitters noted the need for community-centric information hubs, fostering further trust and credibility through community education informed

⁴⁵ IOH Health, *Submission 44*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 59*, p. 3.

⁴⁷ No Offshore Wind Farm Zone—Warrnambool and District, *Submission 181*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Climate Action Newcastle Inc., *Submission 6*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Good for the Gong, *Submission 50*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Business Hunter, *Submission 28*, p. 4.

by evidence, expert advice and economics.⁵¹ HJA expressed that the need stemmed from low levels of trust for the government within the community.⁵²

3.49 ACCESS recommended that due to the significant differences in geographies, economics and social dynamics in the six priority areas for offshore wind, a geographical approach to community consultation should be delivered.⁵³

3.50 There was a high demand for clear information, particularly for the fishing industry and recreational fishers, and a number of fishing industry stakeholders submitted that they held concerns for the future of their business or recreational fishing. Albatross Fisheries Pty Ltd, for example, submitted that uncertainty over access to the declared area for fishing vessels was concerning, as the declared area could result in a loss of business revenue:

We have no knowledge of whether there is any proposal for compensation for the financial losses that we will suffer should this wind farm proceed not only impacting our business but impacting the value of our fishing licences.⁵⁴

3.51 Fishing industry stakeholders including the ARFF and Game Fishing Association of Australia expressed concerns at the manner of the public forums and considered that slow, poor-quality communication was received from the minister's office:⁵⁵

For example, the Minister's 20 February announcement about the proposed WA Offshore wind zone states: "Fishing and offshore wind can co-exist, but it's not automatic that it can". It is unclear if those comments were in reference to all fishing or only certain types of commercial fishing such as trawling. This statement has created an urgent need for clarity on what coexistence looks like for game fishing.⁵⁶

3.52 The issue of practical co-existence between offshore wind and the fishing industry was also raised by the WAFIC.⁵⁷

3.53 WAFIC raised concerns that, during the consultation on the Bunbury area, there was no information provided to the community or to fishing stakeholders with research or analysis or ocean floor mapping. WAFIC stated that the consultation

⁵¹ See, for example, HJA, *Submission 33*, p. 2; Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 2.

⁵² HJA, *Submission 33*, p. 2.

⁵³ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Albatross Fisheries Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, p. 2.

⁵⁵ ARFF, *Submission 37*, pp. 3–7.

⁵⁶ The Game Fishing Association of Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ WAFIC, *Submission 66*, pp. 2–3.

process 'did not provide constructive information or reassurance' which resulted in uncertainty and conflict.⁵⁸

- 3.54 Western Rock Lobster Council called for a significant improvement in the quality and type of information provided during the public consultation process, and stated that insufficient impact assessments and collaboration with marine industries had occurred:

...[the process] lacked transparency and neglected to demonstrate evidence-based justification. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) failed to provide adequate research, criteria analysis, or ocean floor mapping to substantiate the suitability of the selected area for offshore wind farming and failed to satisfy the need to first assess and exclude alternative sites.⁵⁹

- 3.55 The Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative, among other fishing industry representatives, stated that they had not been engaged by DCCEEW in the consultation process. The co-operative stated that early engagement was crucial for the development process:

Understanding the information needs, concerns, and aspirations of our fishers affected by these proposals is an important component of early and effective community engagement in this process.⁶⁰

Public forums

- 3.56 As outlined in the previous chapter, DCCEEW held multiple public forums for each of the six priority areas. Some submitters claimed that the public forums were not adequate or serious in trying to engage in meaningful consultation with the public. For example, the NSW Game Fishing Association stated that:

The community information sessions for both the Hunter and the Illawarra Offshore wind zones were only held during week days and at times when nearly all interested people were at work and could not attend.⁶¹

- 3.57 The Port Stephens Greens stated that a public information session in Nelson Bay to discuss the Hunter proposed offshore wind area had more people attend than may have been expected, and community attendees insisted on a change to the format to accommodate more people, which was 'only reluctantly agreed to'. The Port Stephens Greens stated that:

Local community confidence has **never recovered** from this poor start—many left the session feeling that the Government had already decided to proceed with offshore wind and was just going through the motions with

⁵⁸ WAFIC, *Submission 66*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Western Rock Lobster Council Inc., *Submission 20*, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 196*, p. 3.

⁶¹ New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc., *Submission 4*, p. 2.

token 'consultation' with very limited information about the issues of concern.⁶²

3.58 The ARFF was similarly critical of the public forums, and stated that:

During the consultation process DCCEEW has cancelled public consultation sessions at late notice, restricted public access to other consultation sessions, refused to accept handwritten or emailed petitions, and left people queuing up in the hot sun after underestimating the level of public interest.⁶³

3.59 Recfishwest stated that DCCEEW cancelled at late notice information sessions which were specifically focussed on recreational fishers. Recfishwest stated that an information session to be held in Busselton was cancelled after an information session held in Binningup became heated. Information sessions which were held were stated to be full to capacity, with community members required to queue outside.⁶⁴

3.60 The ARFF described the outcome of the public sessions as generating 'vague promises' about community concerns being addressed once the area has been declared as suitable.⁶⁵

3.61 Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) stated that the public consultation process was insufficient:

The government's engagement with the community has been minimal and inadequate, relying on five face-to-face meetings hosted by DCCEEW and two Town Hall meetings, which saw less than 1 [per cent] of the adults across the Illawarra attend. Can this be considered an adequate consultation with our community, given that it failed to access a representative sample and truly hear concerns and questions? These DCCEEW sessions lacked a formal presentation, delivered poor information, and provided superficial or dismissive responses to questions.⁶⁶

3.62 The Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy considered that the public forum model contained flaws, as it provided 'somewhat limited' information 'to an interested and occasionally hostile public'. In the centre's view, these forums provided 'little, if any, meaningful opportunity for the two-way exchange of knowledge or for deliberation or discussion'.⁶⁷ The centre stated that the use of public forums and written submissions led to information wars, in which science was weaponised in debates over which facts were right and which were wrong. The centre was critical of these models being used in this context:

⁶² Port Stephens Greens, *Submission 55*, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

⁶³ ARFF, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Recfishwest, *Submission 51*, p. 8.

⁶⁵ ARFF, *Submission 37*, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, p. 4.

These models of engagement make it difficult to meaningfully consider and include community values, connections and perspectives and they actively discourage negotiation and deliberation. They do little to constructively build understanding of diverse opinions and values and they often fan division rather than build recognition of the many ways in which the ocean is important to people...⁶⁸

- 3.63 TasRex submitted that DCCEEW had requested that it not participate in public information sessions as it was a potential developer in the Bass Strait area. TasRex was of the view that 'this approach may have been detrimental to TasRex and other proponents' as they were not able to demonstrate their willingness to engage with stakeholder groups and gather community feedback. TasRex stated that this could build 'a mistrust of industry' and recommended that future Commonwealth consultations include proponents.⁶⁹
- 3.64 On the other hand, HunterNet, a network of 160 manufacturing, engineering and specialist services in the Hunter and Central Coast regions, submitted that it was sensible to exclude developers from the DCCEEW zoning consultations, and highlighted the future opportunities for public engagement:

...regulatory measures have sensibly restrained developers from fatiguing communities with consultation effort, especially by developers that aren't even awarded a feasibility licence.⁷⁰

Navigation of online and written information

- 3.65 DCCEEW stated that submissions to its consultation process were able to be made through the DCCEEW Consultation Hub page, which included resources to provide additional information for the proposed areas, including:
- an overview of the proposed area, and frequently asked questions providing localised answers;
 - an overview of existing marine users and interests;
 - a downloadable file showing the proposed area; and
 - a link to a map of the proposed area hosted by Geoscience Australia.⁷¹
- 3.66 The Consultation Hub webpages for each of the six declared areas provide an overview of the current status of the development process, a summary of public consultation undertaken, and information about the area.
- 3.67 Several submitters stated that the information contained on the DCCEEW website relating to the public consultation, or to the proposed offshore wind industry, was difficult to find and challenging to navigate.

⁶⁸ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, p. 4.

⁶⁹ TasRex, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

⁷⁰ HunterNet Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 29*, p. 3.

⁷¹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 5.

- 3.68 For example, Moonshadow—TQC Cruises stated that the DCCEEW website is 'not a website that many would consider looking at' ordinarily. It also submitted that 'to state that this is a form of direct consultation is not practical' and described the consultation process as 'overwhelming to navigate'.⁷²
- 3.69 The Port Stephens Greens noted the 'very large volume of information' available on the DCCEEW website, but stated that 'there is almost too much information, without enough easy to use navigation tools or explanation'.⁷³
- 3.70 Western Rock Lobster Council stated that 'critical contextual, economic and scientific information [was] absent from the initial consultation process', and that the information provided 'presented [an] Australia-wide perspective which may not be entirely appropriate to individual regions but was not accompanied by local (State and regional) information'. Western Rock Lobster Council considered that the information provided 'was suitably generic as to apply to several other sites and provided little context to understand why one area had been identified in preference to any other'.⁷⁴
- 3.71 Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) also contended that the written materials were not detailed, and stated that the flyers provided through letterbox drops were one-sided, and 'promoted the benefits without addressing the detail and facts of what is proposed and the associated risks'.⁷⁵
- 3.72 It was the view of the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) that more thorough information should have been provided, and it called for identification and mapping of biodiversity values and social uses of the offshore wind regions prior to the release of the draft areas. It stated that: 'This lack of planning we believe has led the community into panic'. The VNPA stated that 'because this was not a well thought out process it gave the impression that the Federal Government's lacked care for the protection of marine values'.⁷⁶

Interaction between Commonwealth and state frameworks

- 3.73 Some submitters highlighted the complexity of navigating legislative and regulatory environments at the Commonwealth and state levels. At the Commonwealth level, consultation is led by DCCEEW with mapping provided by Geoscience Australia. The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator is responsible for the regulation of work health and safety, infrastructure integrity and environmental management for offshore infrastructure activities in

⁷² Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, p. 2.

⁷³ Port Stephens Greens, *Submission 55*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Western Rock Lobster Council Inc., *Submission 20*, p. 5.

⁷⁵ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Victorian National Parks Association, *Submission 46*, p. 2.

Commonwealth waters.⁷⁷ State and territory governments are responsible for licensing and regulating projects and associated infrastructure within their coastal waters (under three nautical miles).

3.74 The Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, for example, drew attention to the 'complex and disjointed' responsibilities for renewable energy rollouts, and stated that different layers of government and different departments within those governments are involved. The centre gave the example that the placement and location of offshore wind projects is determined by the Australian Government, but other aspects such as transmission infrastructure are managed by state and local governments.⁷⁸

3.75 Seafood Industry Australia (SIA) stated that the 'arrangements governing ocean access are complex, multi-layered, and vary between jurisdictions'. SIA further stated that there are a variety of overlapping activities which occur on and in the oceans which add to the level of complexity with regard to planning and management.⁷⁹

3.76 The Gippsland Climate Change Network stated that there is confusion between Commonwealth and state processes, and gave the following example:

There is currently some confusion regarding these industry regulatory and legislative frameworks' relationship between State and Federal Governments in the context of offshore wind development...Such complexity underscores the need to consolidate the process and provide a streamlined approach that minimizes the risk of community fatigue.⁸⁰

3.77 Western Rock Lobster Council also drew attention to the issue of jurisdictional overlap:

...the framework is not clear on how the interface between State and Commonwealth jurisdictions will be managed in respect of impacts caused by Commonwealth identified offshore energy initiatives on State coastal waters and site related industries and communities along the WA Coast.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, *Submission 26*, p. 2. Commonwealth waters are located between three nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline to the boundary of Australia's exclusive economic zone (two hundred nautical miles).

⁷⁸ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Seafood Industry Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 2.

⁸¹ Western Rock Lobster Council Inc., *Submission 20*, p. 5.

Misinformation and disinformation

- 3.78 Various submitters identified misinformation and disinformation as one of the most significant threats to genuine community consultation.⁸² For example the CEC, Smart Energy Council and WWF Australia, among others, stated that bad faith actors weaponised misinformation to cause exacerbated community concerns and resistance to offshore wind.⁸³
- 3.79 Similarly, the Maritime Union of Australia and the Electrical Trades Union stated that it was their belief that 'an internationally coordinated disinformation campaign' had affected Australian communities throughout the consultation processes.⁸⁴
- 3.80 The Port Stephens Greens stated that 'there are credible reports that worldwide opposition to windfarms is a coordinated campaign funded by fossil fuel producers'.⁸⁵
- 3.81 Misinformation and disinformation was said to have circulated through posts on social media platforms, including in Facebook groups.⁸⁶ One example of misinformation related to offshore wind farms was given by Good for the Gong and Doctors for the Environment Australia, who drew attention to the online circulation of a fake journal article which claimed that offshore wind farms would kill whales.⁸⁷ The editor of the journal has stated publicly that the article does not exist.⁸⁸
- 3.82 AFP Fact Check noted the spread of posts regarding potential impacts of offshore wind projects on whales, and whale migration, and highlighted posts on social media which stated that whales would become entangled in cables and anchor chains. However, AFP Fact Check stated that 'experts and whale welfare groups say the claims are exaggerated. While offshore wind farms do pose risks

⁸² See, for example, Smart Energy Council, *Submission 62*, pp. 2–3; WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, pp. 3–4; Friends of the Earth Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 2; Parents for Climate, *Submission 49*, p. 2.

⁸³ CEC, *Submission 36*, p. 2; Smart Energy Council, *Submission 62*, pp. 2–3; WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Maritime Union of Australia and the Electrical Trades Union, *Submission 69*, p. 5.

⁸⁵ Port Stephens Greens, *Submission 55*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Oceanex Energy, *Submission 14*, p. 5; Friends of the Earth Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 3; Hunter Workers, *Submission 182*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ Good for the Gong, *Submission 50*, p. 5, Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 53*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Tim Fernandez and Melinda James, 'Editor of scientific journal says fake study linking whale deaths to wind farms is "deliberate misinformation"', [ABC News](#), 7 November 2023 (accessed 21 January 2025).

of entanglement and could alter migration pathways, safeguards can be put in place'.⁸⁹

- 3.83 Media articles also stated that posters, placards and billboards had shown images of beached or living whales with wind turbines in the background, and that social media posts linking to clips from United States (US) network Fox News or of US President Donald Trump discussing offshore wind farms were shared widely in groups opposing offshore wind developments.⁹⁰
- 3.84 WWF Australia stated that offshore wind 'has been a key target for disinformation campaigns that have amplified community opposition and led to polarisation'. WWF Australia highlighted research from the University of Technology Sydney which analysed submissions made during the Illawarra public consultation period, and found that 'a large proportion of submissions opposing the Illawarra offshore Renewable Energy Zone were either directly or indirectly traceable to fossil fuel interests'.⁹¹
- 3.85 The CEC stated that the presence of misinformation and disinformation was concerning, and prevented community members from being able to engage in the process. The CEC noted that DCCEEW had provided information on its website *Offshore Wind Facts*, which was updated throughout the consultation processes.⁹²
- 3.86 During the consultation period, certain communities raised concerns in relation to the offshore wind projects. Some submitters believed these concerns were amplified by a lack of clear information from the government, subsequently leading to an increase in deliberate misinformation being spread amongst communities.⁹³ Oceanex and Hunter Workers explained that confusion throughout the consultation process was amplified by misinformation and disinformation shared across several Facebook groups.⁹⁴ HJA stated that it considered the public consultation process to be the same as other Australian

⁸⁹ Joseph Olbrycht Palmer, 'Impact on whales of offshore wind farms exaggerated by Australian opponents, experts say', [AFP Fact Check](#), 5 January 2024 (accessed 21 January 2025).

⁹⁰ Adam Morton, Jordyn Beazley and Ariel Bogle, 'How a false claim about wind turbines killing whales is spinning out of control in coastal Australia', [The Guardian](#), 12 November 2023 (accessed 21 January 2025).

⁹¹ WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, p. 3.

⁹² CEC, *Submission 36*, p. 2. See: DCCEEW, [Offshore wind facts](#) (accessed 20 January 2025).

⁹³ See, for example, Maritime Union of Australia and the Electrical Trades Union, *Submission 69*, p. 5; Community Power Agency, *Submission 42*, p. 11.

⁹⁴ Oceanex Energy, *Submission 14*, p. 5; Hunter Workers, *Submission 182*, p. 1.

Government consultation processes, but that 'in our view an information vacuum has allowed misinformation to thrive'.⁹⁵

- 3.87 Sea Shepherd Australia raised similar concerns about the amount of misinformation and disinformation witnessed during the consultation period, and stated that it had itself been a victim of this:

[Sea Shepherd Australia] has had to take action to have our material taken down from a website where our policy position was being misrepresented by an anti-OSW [offshore wind] group. The government should actively develop a strategy for dealing with this and as part of this, support information emanating from trusted sources such as universities and publish more information itself. This is particularly important in relation to peer-reviewed research.⁹⁶

- 3.88 The time between the public consultation period and the announcement of the declared area was said to have led to the growth of misinformation and disinformation. According to the Port Stephens Greens, this was due to a lack of substantive new information creating an information vacuum over a 14-month period.⁹⁷

- 3.89 Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), however, submitted that claims of misinformation had been exaggerated to suit political agendas:

False accusations linking groups opposing the proposal to fossil fuel companies and exaggerated claims of "misinformation/disinformation" spread by opponents have been deliberately orchestrated politically and by the media to undermine credibility and sow division within the community. Media coverage has generally been biased.⁹⁸

Combatting misinformation and disinformation

- 3.90 Many submitters argued that the Australian Government should take a role in combatting misinformation and disinformation in relation to the development of a potential offshore wind industry. For example, Good for the Gong suggested that the Australian Government should identify, promote and support services which combat misinformation and disinformation.⁹⁹

- 3.91 Similarly, the Community Power Agency stated that more resources should be directed to raising community awareness for the rationale of offshore wind,

⁹⁵ HJA, *Submission 33*, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Port Stephens Greens, *Submission 55*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Good for the Gong, *Submission 50*, p. 5.

addressing community concerns, and providing clarity on legislative and regulatory frameworks, to assist in combating misinformation.¹⁰⁰

- 3.92 The Port Stephens Greens stated that the Australian Government had been unprepared for campaigns against offshore wind projects:

The failure to understand the community and anticipate the exploitation of the issue for political purposes has allowed opponents of renewables to drive a wedge into the environmental movement, dividing activists and organisations which might have been expected to rally behind the prospect of a major new source of renewable, zero emissions energy.¹⁰¹

- 3.93 The Committee for the Hunter stated that 'debate and discussion on Hunter offshore wind has been marked by misinformation' and suggested that the Australian Electoral Commission should monitor misleading or deceptive communications surrounding political advertising in the Hunter area during the upcoming federal election.¹⁰²

- 3.94 On the other hand, although high levels of concern over misinformation and disinformation are understandable, the Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy cautioned against 'an excessive focus on mis/disinformation' which 'will only serve to further alienate vocal opponents if they feel their complaints are being dismissed as wrong or misinformed'.¹⁰³

Future consultation

- 3.95 This section sets out inquiry participants' views on the next stages of public consultation to be undertaken, by both the Australian Government and prospective proponents, and includes suggestions to improve or clarify information provision and feedback.

- 3.96 For example, WWF Australia suggested that community engagement could be improved by providing greater clarity around the process itself, and stated that it is important that the community understands that offshore wind farm development is a lengthy process, with multiple opportunities for public feedback, and also that there are still many approval milestones and key assessments to be undertaken.¹⁰⁴

- 3.97 Business Hunter considered that there was time for DCCEEW to create resources to clearly communicate key information:

The opportunity to create a resource communicating key messages such as the project rationale, role within the broader energy context, anticipated

¹⁰⁰ Community Power Agency, *Submission 42*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Port Stephens Greens, *Submission 55*, p. 1.

¹⁰² Committee for the Hunter, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, p. 4.

impact on future business and household energy costs, key project phases and projected timeline (including consultation opportunities) has not been missed, and would encourage collaboration and inclusivity as this project moves forward.¹⁰⁵

- 3.98 HunterNet submitted that the reduction in size of the declared area in the Hunter proposed offshore wind area (including a reduction in size of the proposed generation capacity from 8 gigawatts (GW) to 5 GW) should have led to consultation. HunterNet was of the view that the smaller size would not support the establishment of an offshore wind industry, and that the Hunter area is ideal for offshore wind. HunterNet suggested that consultation should have taken place to discuss this:

An extra step to bring stakeholders together to better understand mutual needs would have been preferable to at least explore the possible without needlessly and over compromising respective needs which seems to have occurred. This may have resulted in a far different outcome in terms of sizing and placement of the zone, opening up the opportunity and likely success of establishing an industry for global participation. **The extra step of mutual stakeholder orientation should have occurred in the consultation process to mitigate the issues and risks detailed above.**¹⁰⁶

- 3.99 Climate Action Newcastle suggested the establishment of independent expert reference and advisory groups and resourcing local community groups to participate in future consultations.¹⁰⁷
- 3.100 Concerns over future consultation fatigue were raised by the South Gippsland Shire Council, who noted that multiple similar projects are underway concurrently.¹⁰⁸ Further, the South Gippsland Shire Council expressed that a coordinated approach to such future consultations should be undertaken.¹⁰⁹

Consultation to be undertaken during Stage 2

- 3.101 Public consultation opportunities are set to continue as projects progress through the offshore wind industry assessment and approval process set out in the previous chapter. Sea Shepherd Australia noted that a number of issues raised during the public Stage 1 consultation processes are set to be addressed by proponents during the next stage. Particularly, many issues raised during consultation would be addressed when feasibility licence holders are required

¹⁰⁵ Business Hunter, *Submission 28*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ HunterNet Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 29*, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁷ Climate Action Newcastle Inc., *Submission 6*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ South Gippsland Shire Council, *Submission 10*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ South Gippsland Shire Council, *Submission 10*, p. 2.

to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.¹¹⁰

- 3.102 Wollongong City Council stated that its submission to the DCCEEW consultation was underpinned by the understanding that the consultation was the first phase to seek public feedback, with an expectation that more consultation opportunities would arise as the project evolves. Wollongong City Council particularly noted the opportunity for proponents to provide more detailed consultation during the approval process.¹¹¹
- 3.103 The Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy suggested that more work should be undertaken on contextualising the offshore wind projects within the broader energy transition and environmental changes.¹¹²
- 3.104 Further to this, Oceanex highlighted that organisations granted feasibility licences 'hold the prime responsibility for stakeholder engagement, community consultation and social licence'.¹¹³
- 3.105 RES Australia noted that it is unlikely that construction would commence for at least four years, with projects yet to complete and lodge their Environmental Impact Statements, a requirement for further approvals to commence construction.¹¹⁴
- 3.106 TasRex, a renewable energy company, pointed out that, regarding Stage 2 of the offshore wind development process, the regulatory framework only provides the proponent with 60 days to apply for a feasibility licence after the declaration of the area, which includes instances where the area is different to the area on which there was consultation. TasRex stated that this limited the opportunity for proponents to consider community views:

Short lodgement timeframes place significant demands on a proponent's ability to consider the broad and varied interests of the diverse stakeholder groups in the declared zone in finalising the proposed area for which to seek a feasibility licence, alongside finalising the technical aspects of the project and bid.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Wollongong City Council, *Submission 23*, p. 1.

¹¹² Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, p. 4.

¹¹³ Oceanex Energy, *Submission 14*, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ RES Australia Pty Ltd, *Submission 65*, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ TasRex, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

3.107 HunterNet highlighted the future opportunities for public engagement and suggested that DCCEEW be more active in 'reinforcing the message that communities have a lot more consultation to be enjoyed'.¹¹⁶

Next chapter

3.108 The next chapter sets out views on the consultation process relating to the impacts of offshore wind projects on the marine environment, fishing and tourism industries, and noise and light pollution.

¹¹⁶ HunterNet Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 29*, p. 3.

Chapter 4

Potential impacts of offshore wind projects on the marine environment

Overview

- 4.1 Throughout the offshore wind consultation process for Stage 1—initial consultation and regional zoning—undertaken by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), community members and industry stakeholders expressed a range of views about potential impacts on the marine environment and shared use of the proposed declared areas.
- 4.2 These included the potential impacts of offshore wind projects on the marine environment in general, on the fishing and tourism industries, and issues relating to potential noise and light pollution and visual amenity.
- 4.3 This chapter firstly sets out the requirements of the consultation process to consider environmental impacts and strategies to mitigate and manage impacts on marine life and the marine environment. The chapter then outlines the various concerns raised by inquiry participants on these issues.
- 4.4 The next chapter examines the recognition of the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) within the consultation process, and views of First Nations and other submitters.

Requirements to consider and mitigate potential impacts of offshore wind projects

- 4.5 As outlined in Chapter 2, under the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act), when making a decision to declare an area as being suitable for offshore renewable energy infrastructure, the Minister for Climate Change and Energy (the minister) must consider:
 - the potential impacts of the project's lifecycle (including from construction to decommissioning) on other marine users and interests;
 - submissions received as part of the public consultation process; and
 - international obligations in relation to the area.¹
- 4.6 During Stage 2 of the offshore wind project process, any offshore renewable energy activity that is likely to have a significant impact on a nationally protected matter must also undergo an environmental assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act requires proponents to undertake public consultation, with separate

¹ *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021*, s. 19.

requirements to those in the OEI Act and Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Regulations 2022.²

4.7 Additional environmental factors identified during public consultation may also be considered by the minister prior to the final declaration decision being made.³

4.8 DCCEEW stated that the Australian Government consults with state departments and agencies regarding matters of environmental significance to ensure that the proposed area avoids known areas of environmental significance to the greatest extent possible. Offshore wind areas must avoid Australian marine parks which help conserve marine habitats and the species that live within and rely on these habitats.⁴

4.9 Under the EPBC Act process, DCCEEW stated that 'projects must demonstrate how they will ensure impacts to protected matters will not be unacceptable', and that:

Individual proposals will need to detail how they have avoided impacts to nationally protected matters and demonstrate how they will manage any residual impacts to an acceptable level to obtain an approval under the EPBC Act.⁵

4.10 DCCEEW has published guidance for industry to identify key environmental factors associated with offshore wind projects. The guidance contains an overview of the regulatory framework and legislative requirements as well as the environmental matters relevant to offshore wind.⁶ According to DCCEEW, this guidance has been developed in line with international best practice and includes information on:⁷

- collision risk for birds;
- underwater noise and seabed disturbance;
- electromagnetic fields;
- underwater vessel collisions;
- light emissions; and
- invasive marine species, among others.⁸

² Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), *Submission 61*, p. 16.

³ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 21.

⁴ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 21.

⁵ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 21.

⁶ DCCEEW, [*Guidance—Key environmental factors for offshore windfarm environmental impact assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*](#), July 2023.

⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 21–22.

⁸ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 22.

The role of Geoscience Australia in supporting community consultation

- 4.11 Geoscience Australia has a role to contribute to the scientific evidence base needed to underpin decision-making and ensure offshore developments are socially and ecologically sustainable.⁹
- 4.12 Geoscience Australia provides information and advice to DCCEEW as part of the Australian Government's consultation process, including by mapping the seabed and sub-seabed environment to determine the potential environmental impacts from offshore wind infrastructure. Geoscience Australia also plays an ongoing role by supporting the effective assessment, monitoring and management of potential impacts.¹⁰
- 4.13 Geoscience Australia makes marine geoscience data publicly available via online portals, including the Australian Marine Spatial Information System (AMSIS), thereby enabling members of the public to access 'timely, relevant and accurate marine information to aid decision making about the potential impacts of offshore wind developments'.¹¹
- 4.14 Geoscience Australia submitted that interactive mapping and visualisation tools like AMSIS helped to address some of the challenges that arose during DCCEEW's public consultation process, such as public confusion over the rationale for the proposed offshore wind areas, negative public perception of the process, and mis- and dis-information.¹²

Potential impacts on the marine environment

- 4.15 The potential impacts on the marine environment which could result from the development of an offshore wind industry vary throughout the project's lifecycle. Climate Action Newcastle, for example, considered that the main impact on the marine environment would occur during the construction phase.¹³
- 4.16 Sea Shepherd Australia stated that it had had a positive experience during the public consultation period led by DCCEEW when raising environmental concerns, and noted that issues such as whale migration had been raised at the public forums Sea Shepherd representatives had attended. At a forum held in Bunbury, concerns over whale migration paths and mitigation strategies had led to discussion of increasing the spaces between turbines in order to address these concerns.¹⁴

⁹ Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 4.

¹⁰ Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, pp. 4–5.

¹¹ Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 6.

¹² Geoscience Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 6.

¹³ Climate Action Newcastle Inc., *Submission 6*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 2.

- 4.17 Sea Shepherd Australia acknowledged that future stages of the development process for offshore wind projects would allow for more specific detail to be given on environmental impacts.¹⁵
- 4.18 Responsible Renewables Committee Port Stephens Myall Coast summarised its environmental concerns for:
- ...large populations of various migratory whale species, fertile fishing grounds due to upwellings/incursions of nutrient-rich water from the deep ocean, endangered and protected bird life (Gould's petrel), Ramsar wetlands, shark nurseries, sea turtles, and largely unmapped benthic habitats/communities across the outer shelf (rocky reefs) and within the shelf edge canyon systems.¹⁶

Potential impacts on migratory species

- 4.19 Many submitters raised concerns about the potential impacts on migratory species, including whales and sea bird species.
- 4.20 The potential impact on migratory species resulting from the displacement of shipping lanes by offshore wind projects was raised by Imagine Cruises, which stated that ships using the 'busiest shipping lane in Australia', including coal and bauxite carriers to and from Newcastle Harbour and container and passenger ships, would have to navigate around the area and may transit closer to the shore to avoid difficult conditions.¹⁷
- 4.21 Imagine Cruises outlined the potential impact on species including humpback and other whales, dolphins and large pelagic fish that would consequently be 'exposed to shipstrike both from passing vessels and construction vessels'.¹⁸
- 4.22 Various submitters expressed concern about offshore wind farms being proposed in areas that overlap with, and have the potential to disrupt, the migratory paths of marine life and birds.¹⁹ For instance, the Victorian National Parks Association observed that the impacts of offshore wind farms can include 'turbines and subsea cables blocking the routes of migratory threatened species

¹⁵ Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast, *Submission 9*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Imagine Cruises, *Submission 13*, p. 1.

¹⁸ Imagine Cruises, *Submission 13*, p. 2.

¹⁹ See, for example, The Game Fishing Association of Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 3; Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, pp. 3–4; WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, pp. 4–5; BirdLife Australia, *Submission 39*, p. 1; Nature Conservation Council of NSW, *Submission 41*, p. 3; EcoNetwork Port Stephens, *Submission 57*, p. 5; Sherry Ellen Pty Ltd, *Submission 63*, p. 1; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 75*, p. 14.

such as albatross, southern right whales, and important fishery species such as snapper'.²⁰

- 4.23 Likewise, the Hunter Community Environment Centre explained that offshore wind farms could impact marine and migratory birds through collision, displacement, barrier effect and habitat change and loss.²¹
- 4.24 Former councillor Mark Croxford of the Kiama Municipal Council claimed that DCCEEW's consultation process 'failed to adequately address the potential environmental impacts...posed by the offshore wind industry' and 'downplayed or ignored' threats to marine and migratory bird life.²²
- 4.25 DCCEEW pointed out that, in response to concerns raised during the consultation period about impacts to migratory species, the minister declared an offshore wind area off Gippsland, Victoria that excluded areas nearest the shore to reduce potential impacts on migrating whales, and declared an area off Illawarra, NSW that avoided the southern right whale migration and reproduction area.²³
- 4.26 DCCEEW also noted that the Australian Government is investing in research into the potential environmental impacts of offshore wind, for example the National Environmental Science Program's projects on southern right whales, blue whales and migratory shorebirds.²⁴ DCCEEW outlined several strategies that are commonly used internationally to mitigate the environmental impacts of offshore wind technology, including careful site selection to avoid high biodiversity areas and major migratory routes and restricting turbine operation during migratory seasons for birds.²⁵
- 4.27 In this regard DCCEEW submitted that:
- The research being funded by the government will consider international best practice approaches to avoid, mitigate and manage potential impacts and inform an understanding of which measures are suitable for application in the Australian context, and what changes to others may be required to develop leading practice approaches for Australian waters.²⁶

²⁰ Victorian National Parks Association, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

²¹ Hunter Community Environment Centre, *Submission 68*, p. 9.

²² Cr Mark Croxford, *Submission 167*, pp. 1–2.

²³ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 6 and 10.

²⁴ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 23.

²⁵ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 24–25.

²⁶ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 23.

Potential for positive marine environmental effects

- 4.28 The potential for positive impacts on marine life due to the existence of offshore renewable electricity infrastructure was noted by the Gippsland Climate Change Network, which highlighted international examples of the structures creating artificial reefs which offer shelter for species.²⁷

The fishing and tourism industries

- 4.29 Representatives of the fishing and tourism industries raised various concerns about the development of offshore wind projects, including the potential for negative impacts on their operations, the environment and the social wellbeing of communities.
- 4.30 Local operators where there are proposed declared offshore wind project areas told the committee about their concerns directly, and their experience of raising these issues during the consultation process led by DCCEEW.

Potential impact on commercial and recreational fishing

- 4.31 The inquiry heard concerns about the challenges that could be posed by offshore wind projects for those involved in commercial and recreational fishing. These included potential access restrictions and exclusion zones of wind farms across key fishing areas, impact on fishing grounds, environmental impacts on marine life, and economic consequences for communities and industries that depend on recreational and commercial fishing.
- 4.32 For example, the Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative identified a range of direct industry impacts associated with offshore wind projects within the proposed location off the Hunter, citing disruptions for ocean trawl, ocean trap, lobster and ocean line fisheries.²⁸ It argued that removing these fishing grounds that supply neighbouring cooperatives would lead to their shut down and 'significantly impact the Sydney Fish Market and seafood supply into NSW and Australia'.²⁹
- 4.33 Submissions from the Game Fishing Association of Australia and the NSW Game Fishing Association highlighted the potential adverse impact on communities and industries that depend on recreational fishing including charter boats, retail and maintenance.³⁰
- 4.34 The NSW Game Fishing Association warned that offshore wind turbines generate significant underwater noise and electromagnetic disturbances which

²⁷ Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 3.

²⁸ Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 196*, p. 1.

²⁹ Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd, *Submission 196*, p. 5.

³⁰ See, for example, The Game Fishing Association of Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 4; New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc., *Submission 4*, p. 3.

would impact marine life in areas that are 'hotspots for game/sport/recreational fishers as well as charter and commercial fishers'.³¹ Accordingly, the association identified there would be a 'triple bottom line' impact of offshore wind projects:

Impacts on fishing whether it is the commercial, charter or recreational/game fishing sector, will be significantly impacted by the introduction of offshore wind farms... With the exclusion of fishing activity, both recreational/game, charter and commercial in the affected areas by the offshore wind farms will have a triple-bottom-line effect. The economic, social, and environmental consequences for the recreational fishermen, the commercial fishing industry, the coastal communities that depend on these sectors, and society in general, will be negatively impacted.³²

- 4.35 Access to areas currently used for fishing for commercial or recreational purposes was raised throughout submissions from fishing stakeholders. For example, the Commonwealth Fisheries Association stated that:

The most fundamental challenge for the fishing industry is to the security and value of fishing access rights. Many aspects of fishing access rights remain relatively tenuous and subject to erosion or encroachment through shifts in government policy or the expansion of activities by other marine resource user groups.³³

Potential impact on the tourism industry

- 4.36 Tourism operators, including nature-based tourism charters for whale and dolphin watching, highlighted the potential impacts on their sector due to potential habitat disruption arising from underwater noise, collision risks, and displacement of marine life.

- 4.37 Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, a tourism charter vessel company based in Port Stephens, expressed concern that the location of the offshore wind farms has the potential to disrupt marine habitats and affect the feeding, breeding and migration patterns of marine species including multiple whale and dolphin species.³⁴

- 4.38 It also highlighted that the visual impact of wind turbines could detract from the natural beauty of coastal areas, potentially leading to a decline in tourism:

An area such as ours that relies on its natural beauty may see a decline in tourism if visitors perceive wind farms as detracting from the area's appeal.³⁵

³¹ New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc., *Submission 4*, p. 3.

³² New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc., *Submission 4*, p. 3.

³³ Commonwealth Fisheries Association, *Submission 197*, p. 1.

³⁴ Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, p. 3.

³⁵ Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, p. 4.

- 4.39 Broader perspectives on the visual amenity impacts of offshore wind projects are set out below.
- 4.40 Other submitters also raised the potential economic impact of offshore wind turbines on major tourist destinations. For example, No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens outlined that tourism injects over \$800 million into the local economy annually and that the proposed development could 'potentially destroy its major industry of tourism with consequent flow on effects of severe economic downturn and social decline'.³⁶
- 4.41 In contrast to these views, Business Hunter argued that the presence of offshore wind farms could attract eco-tourists and lead to the development of new tourism ventures such as boat tours or educational centres.³⁷

Calls for a national policy for all marine users

- 4.42 Several submitters, including commercial and recreational fishers, called for a national framework to manage the various interests of marine users. The Commonwealth Fisheries Association recommended a national policy and framework for all marine users and noted the 'fragmented governance' for offshore planning. A more coordinated approach to marine planning was recommended, with 'access to compensation mechanisms or pathways for fishers to challenge marine planning decisions or seek arbitration'.³⁸

Noise and light pollution

- 4.43 Some submitters expressed concerns regarding both the potential noise and light pollution caused by offshore wind projects, as well as DCCEE's consultation regarding these impacts.

Underwater noise

- 4.44 A community group, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), criticised DCCEE for not being forthcoming during the consultation process about the key environmental risk factors associated with offshore wind projects, including underwater noise:

DCCEE outlines 13 key risk areas that could have negative impacts relating to OSW [offshore wind] projects...However, during the consultation process, none of the DCCEE representatives shared that the government had already identified these 13 critical risk factors. Instead, the community had to uncover this information through independent research. Why was such vital information not presented to the community during

³⁶ No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, *Submission 12*, p. 9.

³⁷ Business Hunter, *Submission 28*, p. 4.

³⁸ Commonwealth Fisheries Association, *Submission 197*, p. 1.

consultation sessions? What does this omission say about the transparency and integrity of the consultation process?³⁹

- 4.45 A range of submitters also highlighted that underwater noise generated by the construction and operation of offshore wind turbines can seriously disrupt marine animals' behaviours such as communication, navigation, feeding and reproduction.⁴⁰ The Australian Marine Conservation Society noted that it was particularly concerned about:

...the risk of impacts to endangered and protected whales species where offshore wind areas are proposed in biologically important areas for reproduction, foraging and migration, or habitat critical to the survival of the species, and where these impacts potentially cannot be avoided or sufficiently mitigated...⁴¹

- 4.46 Rainforest Reserves Australia observed that several overseas studies have demonstrated that noise from offshore wind farms poses 'significant threats' to marine mammals:

The construction of offshore wind farms, particularly the pile driving required to install turbine foundations, generates intense underwater noise ...capable of causing auditory damage and inducing behavioural changes in marine mammals...Once operational, offshore wind farms continue to produce noise, albeit at lower levels than during construction. However, the continuous and pervasive nature of this noise can result in chronic stress for marine mammals, affecting their behaviour, health, and survival.⁴²

- 4.47 Although Doctors for the Environment Australia acknowledged that there are environmental impacts associated with securing wind turbine foundations to the seabed, it asserted that the sonar mapping technology used in the development of offshore wind farms is 'much "quieter", and has a significantly reduced risk of harming marine life' compared to seismic blasting used in offshore oil and gas exploration.⁴³

Light pollution

- 4.48 Several submitters also raised concerns about the potential impacts of light pollution. For example, No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens submitted:

³⁹ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, p. 19.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Australian Fishing Trade Association, *Submission 3*, p. 1; New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc., *Submission 4*, p. 3; No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, *Submission 12*, pp. 7–8; Moonshadow—TQC Cruises, *Submission 22*, p. 3; WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, pp. 4–5; Victorian National Parks Association, *Submission 46*, p. 6; Hunter Community Environment Centre, *Submission 68*, p. 14.

⁴¹ Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 59*, p. 5.

⁴² Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

⁴³ Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 53*, p. 4.

...light pollution at night from wind turbines places birds and other species such as turtles at risk due to confusion. Studies show that light pollution is also impacting animal behaviours, such as migration patterns, wake-sleep habits, and habitat formation. Because of light pollution, sea turtles and birds guided by moonlight during migration get confused, lose their way, and often die.⁴⁴

4.49 DCCEEW acknowledged that artificial light emissions around offshore wind farm development sites can disrupt biological behaviours, particularly for birds and marine turtles. However, it suggested these risks can be minimised through techniques such as:

- Reducing light emitted to the minimum required to meet standards for safety and navigation.
- Careful lighting design that is tailored to manage spectral sensitivities of receptors, and considering factors such as wavelength, orientation/shielding, intensity and timing.
- Limiting reflective surfaces in infrastructure design.⁴⁵

Visual amenity

4.50 Various submitters commented on the visual amenity impacts of offshore wind projects as well as the adequacy of DCCEEW's consultation on these impacts. As outlined earlier, a number of local businesses in the areas near proposed offshore wind projects expressed concerns about the visual impact of large turbines on the natural landscape, including for tourism.⁴⁶

4.51 Further, a group of researchers from the University of Wollongong and Deakin University who monitored DCCEEW's community consultation process in the Illawarra observed that 'many people expressed frustration that there was insufficient information available' about the visual impacts of offshore wind projects.⁴⁷

4.52 There was some concern that the visualisation of wind turbines that DCCEEW presented during the consultation process was 'misleading and factually incorrect' as it showed 'fewer, shorter turbines that were located further out to

⁴⁴ No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, *Submission 12*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 22; DCCEEW, [Guidance—Key environmental factors for offshore windfarm environmental impact assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#), July 2023, p. 29.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast, *Submission 9*, p. 3; Imagine Cruises, *Submission 13*, p. 1; The Hon Ms Nola Marino MP, Dr Steve Thomas MLC and Mr Ben Small, *Submission 122*, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁷ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, p. 7.

sea than the proposed Illawarra project'.⁴⁸ Two examples of the visualisations are at Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

- 4.53 The Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation and Recfishwest submitted that, when questioned, DCCEEW was 'unable to explain why the visualisations had omitted the presence of substations' which would have had a greater impact on visual amenity than turbines.⁴⁹

Figure 4.1 Digital rendering of wind turbines off Mount Keira (Illawarra, NSW)



Source: DCCEEW, [Illawarra, NSW declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁴⁸ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁹ Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, *Submission 37*, p. 8; Recfishwest, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

Figure 4.2 Digital rendering of wind turbines off Low Head, George Town (Bass Strait, northern Tas)



Source: DCCEEW, [Bass Strait, Northern Tasmania declared offshore wind area](#) (accessed 30 January 2025).

- 4.54 On the other hand, some submitters stated that they were pleased with DCCEEW's use of visualisations to improve the community's understanding of visual impacts,⁵⁰ with the Maritime Union of Australia and the Electrical Trades Union saying, 'it was useful that the government took steps to increase the public information and produce accurate visualisations in 2023'.⁵¹
- 4.55 DCCEEW submitted that, in response to stakeholder concerns about visual amenity that were raised throughout the consultation period, in all regions the minister declared smaller areas. In two regions, the Hunter and west coast Victoria, the zone boundaries were moved further away from the shoreline than originally proposed (20 km offshore as opposed to 10 or 15 km offshore).⁵² Several submitters viewed these changes as a 'genuine attempt by the government to incorporate community views and manage potential environmental and social impacts as part of the public consultation process'.⁵³

⁵⁰ Good for the Gong, *Submission 50*, p. 4; Surfers for Climate, *Submission 73*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Maritime Union of Australia and the Electrical Trades Union, *Submission 69*, p. 5.

⁵² DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, pp. 6–10.

⁵³ Surfers for Climate, *Submission 73*, p. 4. See also, Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 1; Oceanex Energy, *Submission 14*, pp. 6–7; Wollongong City Council, *Submission 23*, p. 2; Hunter Workers, *Submission 182*, p. 2.

Next chapter

4.56 The next chapter addresses views on the consultation process' adherence to principles of FPIC.

Chapter 5

Free, prior and informed consent

Overview

- 5.1 The importance of First Nations engagement, and adherence to the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) within Australian Government consultation for potential offshore wind industry development was raised throughout the inquiry by First Nations submitters and other groups.
- 5.2 This chapter outlines:
- First Nations interests in sea country;
 - background information relating to FPIC;
 - the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's (DCCEEW) recognition of FPIC within the offshore wind industry development process; and
 - views of First Nations and other submitters on whether FPIC has been adhered to during Stage 1 of the offshore wind development process—initial consultation and regional zoning.
- 5.3 The following chapter contains the committee's view and recommendations.

Traditional Owner interests in sea country

- 5.4 The Sea Country Alliance stated that the potential impacts of an offshore wind industry on sea country are broad and relate both to tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The Sea Country Alliance stated that:
- Injudiciously managed, the [offshore wind industry] and the [offshore electricity infrastructure framework] generally poses a significant threat to Traditional Owner rights to live their cultural connections to this Country. Potential impacts are far more diverse than damage to submerged physical sites, they also include the visual interference on the cultural landscape, the impact on social, economic and cultural activities and effect on cultural species.¹
- 5.5 Jurisprudence which recognises the existence and legal relevance of Traditional Owners' interests in offshore areas was raised by the Sea Country Alliance, which noted that these arise in the context of the broader offshore electricity infrastructure framework and Native Title, rather than the more limited context of the offshore wind industry. The alliance considered that the offshore wind industry is 'to date relatively unmitigated'.²

¹ Sea Country Alliance, *Submission 64*, p. 3.

² Sea Country Alliance, *Submission 64*, p. 3.

- 5.6 The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations supported the Sea Country Alliance submission, and put forward that Traditional Owners' interests in the lands and waters impacted by an offshore wind industry are uncanceled, with 'millennia deep connections as part of the cultural heritage of the Country'.³
- 5.7 The Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC), based in Breakaway Creek, Victoria, explained the significance of Gunditjmara Nyamat Mirring Sea Country in the Southern Ocean proposed offshore wind area:
- Our sea Country holds profound significance for Gunditjmara, representing not only a vital source of sustenance and livelihood, but also serving as a sacred cultural landscape intertwined with our cultural identity, stories, and ancestral connections. With more than 2,000 generations of connection with our Country, sea levels have changed and some of our Country is now covered by the Southern Ocean—this does not make it less significant to us or impact upon our connection with it.⁴

Free, prior and informed consent

- 5.8 FPIC is recognised in the Charter of the United Nations, and the framework for FPIC consists of a series of international legal instruments including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to which Australia is a signatory.⁵
- 5.9 WWF Australia highlighted that FPIC 'extends beyond any state-based policy or legislation' and is 'an inalienable right of Indigenous peoples globally'.⁶
- 5.10 The Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy highlighted that the UNDRIP has not been implemented in Australian law, policy and practice, and stated that 'this allows the government to claim it is supporting UNDRIP, while leaving Aboriginal people without recourse to fairness and equity'. The centre stated that:
- At present, however, without the clear pathways that Aboriginal people can determine the extent of adherence to FPIC, as outlined under UNDRIP, this leaves developers with the rights to override basic principles of self-determination and leaves Aboriginal people without redress.⁷

³ Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, *Submission 17*, p. 1.

⁴ Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC), *Submission 31*, p. 1.

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, [*Free Prior and Informed Consent: An indigenous peoples' right and a good practice for local communities*](#), 2016, pp. 12–13. The Convention on Biological Diversity is also one of these legal instruments.

⁶ WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, p. 6.

⁷ Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy, *Submission 38*, pp. 6–7.

- 5.11 Several submitters highlighted the work of the First Nations Clean Energy Network, including its publication of best practice principles of clean energy projects.⁸ These principles include: engaging respectfully; prioritising clear, accessible and accurate information; ensuring economic benefits are shared; ensuring cultural competency; and regular reporting back on commitments made.⁹

Recognition of FPIC principles in the offshore wind industry development process

- 5.12 DCCEEW stated that, 'as Australia transitions to renewable energy, many renewable energy projects will need to access First Nations lands and waters for development'.¹⁰
- 5.13 DCCEEW also stated that the processes for offshore renewable energy development 'recognise and reflect FPIC principles and are designed to implement these to the greatest extent possible within the [*Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act)] and associated regulations'.¹¹
- 5.14 DCCEEW further stated that it has taken actions to build strong, respectful and genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which are reflected in its *Statement of Commitment to First Nations people*. The statement outlines DCCEEW's commitment to meaningfully engage and partner with First Nations people, create a culturally supportive environment for First Nations employees and increase understanding, knowledge and appreciation of First Nations cultures within DCCEEW.¹² Other departmental actions include:
- the establishment of a First Nations branch in the department in June 2023;
 - investment in the cultural competency of departmental staff;
 - development of a long-term First Nations Strategy;
 - development of a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy; and
 - the establishment of an FPIC working group, which concluded at the end of 2024.¹³
- 5.15 DCCEEW acknowledged that possible changes to the coastal and marine environment associated with a potential offshore wind industry 'can bring

⁸ WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, p. 6; Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 59*, p. 4.

⁹ Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 59*, p. 4.

¹⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

¹¹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 20.

¹² See: DCCEEW, [Statement of Commitment to First Nations people](#), June 2024.

¹³ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

uncertainty for some First Nations people with cultural connections and values associated with the area'.¹⁴

- 5.16 DCCEEW stated that the OEI Act and associated regulations (including proposed regulations) 'have been designed so that thorough consultation will occur prior to and throughout the life of projects from declaration to decommissioning to achieve best possible outcomes for the community'.¹⁵ The framework prescribes early engagement with First Nations people to allow participation 'in an informed way' and to gather views on proposed developments.¹⁶
- 5.17 The broader processes have been designed to facilitate early and ongoing engagement with First Nations groups, and to facilitate and encourage agreement-making between First Nations groups and project developers. DCCEEW stated that it 'considers that, at a minimum, FPIC requires that consultations not be a mere formality, but, rather, should be conducted in good faith and with the objective of finding common agreement'.¹⁷
- 5.18 DCCEEW's engagement, or attempts to initiate engagement, with First Nations communities and Traditional Owners for Stage 1 of the development process in each of the six identified priority areas is set out in Chapter 2. During the respective consultation periods, DCCEEW engaged with multiple First Nations representative bodies in each of the six identified priority areas.
- 5.19 However, the Australian Centre for Culture, Environment, Society and Space (ACCESS) identified that there is no express requirement in the OEI Act that the Minister for Climate Change and Energy (the minister) consult with Traditional Owners before declaring an area as suitable for offshore wind developments. ACCESS also stated that the OEI Act foresees co-existing and non-exclusive rights between developers and Native Title holders. ACCESS further stated that sections of the OEI Act override Native Title, with the caveat that the interference must not be greater than is necessary.¹⁸

Concerns raised over adherence to FPIC principles

- 5.20 DCCEEW noted that concerns had been raised by several First Nations groups during consultations, relating to the limits of applying FPIC in the context of offshore renewables.¹⁹

¹⁴ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

¹⁵ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 19.

¹⁶ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 19.

¹⁷ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 20.

¹⁸ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, p. 8.

¹⁹ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 21.

- 5.21 Concerns raised by First Nations groups related to having insufficient time and resources to properly engage in the declaration consultation process; and the absence of First Nations consent as a provision of the OEI Act framework.²⁰

Resourcing required to enable full engagement within the timeframes provided

- 5.22 The GMTOAC stated that, although supportive of environmental protection and action on climate change, the announcement of an offshore renewable energy region 'was met with disappointment...due to the complete lack of appropriate consultation between the Commonwealth government and the Gunditjmara community'.²¹
- 5.23 The GMTOAC considered that the timeframes for responding during public consultation were not sufficient for Gunditjmara Traditional Owners to formalise a position statement, which resulted in the GMTOAC stating their position as being against offshore renewable energy infrastructure being placed within Nyamat Mirring Sea Country.²²
- 5.24 The GMTOAC stated that:
- ...this decision [by the minister to designate an offshore renewable energy zone within Nyamat Mirring Sea Country] undermines our sovereignty as land rights holders and defies the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.²³
- 5.25 ACCESS highlighted impacts for Traditional Owners around decisions on transmission lines coming into coastal waters and onto land. ACCESS stated that while the OEI Act contemplates that consultations with Traditional Owners will be conducted by developers on a project-by-project basis, the Act does not make provision to resource Traditional Owners to undertake potentially overlapping consultations with different developers.²⁴

Lack of discussion opportunities and tangible outcomes from consultation

- 5.26 Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, based in Williamtown, New South Wales, stated that there had not been discussions on the potential impacts of offshore wind projects on:
- marine life, the marine environment and migratory birds;
 - future Native Title claims, the Worimi Conservation Lands and private freehold lands, and lands under claim;

²⁰ DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 21.

²¹ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 1.

²² GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

²³ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 1.

²⁴ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, p. 8.

- the cultural significance, connections and impact to Worimi waterways. These include (but are not limited to) Broughton Island and Cabbage Tree Islands, Yacaaba and the Tomaree Headlands and Dark Point; and
 - cultural significance and spiritual connections, including celestial sites.²⁵
- 5.27 The GMTOAC set out its experience engaging with the minister and stated that it had sent two letters to the minister to highlight the need for independent research to assess the cultural and environmental impacts of an offshore wind industry in the area, and to invite the minister to meet with the GMTOAC. In November 2023, representatives met with the minister online to discuss a meaningful engagement strategy with 'FPIC as a minimum standard', but considered that 'no tangible nor satisfactory outcomes occurred from this isolated meeting'.²⁶
- 5.28 The GMTOAC recommended that independent research be commissioned to assess the cultural and environmental impacts of an offshore wind industry, including:
- Marine Spatial Planning to determine cumulative interactions between industries
 - Research into the impacts of offshore energy infrastructure on the ecology of sea kin, including the Bonney upwelling, eel and shorebird migration and marine mammal habitats
 - Mapping of the paleo landscape and sea floor to identify ecosystem, habitats and cultural heritage sites
 - Consultation with Gunditjmarra to determine and protect further tangible and intangible cultural heritage
 - The aesthetic impact on the land and sea by renewable energy infrastructure be adequately explored
 - Compounding and cumulative impact assessment of onshore and offshore—resulting in both land and sea country being surrounded by infrastructure without any considerations of how these will impact Gunditjmarra community and Country.²⁷

Absence of consent

- 5.29 Several First Nations groups submitted that they had not provided consent for offshore wind projects. Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, for example, stated that 'until there is appropriate communication and sufficient information provided, there cannot be free, prior and informed comment or consent from the Worimi community for this offshore wind industry'.²⁸

²⁵ Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, *Submission 2*, p .1.

²⁶ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

²⁷ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

²⁸ Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, *Submission 2*, p .1.

- 5.30 Likewise, the GMTOAC stated clearly that the Traditional Owners had never ceded sovereignty of the land and waters, and stated that the 'sovereign rights of the Gunditjmarra Traditional Owners have not been considered adequately throughout the consultation process'.²⁹ Further, and as noted above, concerns about poor engagement by the Australian Government had led to the GMTOAC asserting a 'no' position on an offshore wind development in its Sea Country. However, due to the declaration of the area, GMTOAC felt compelled to engage:

Despite the default position of "No", GMTOAC on behalf of Gunditjmarra are now compelled, as the custodians of land and sea country, to participate in activities that assume a position of approval and with proponents who often attempt to negate GMTOAC internal governance structures, decision making processes and do not account for our timeframes.³⁰

- 5.31 GMTOAC was of the view that the principles of FPIC were not being adhered to by the pace and intensity of consultation, and expressed that they felt compelled to engage in a consultation process without being heard:

The rapid pace the offshore wind energy sector is progressing at, in conjunction with the lack of prior, independent research and provision of resourcing to GMTOAC, results in GMTOAC continually being challenged by government and industry to respond and participate in a manner that prioritises their objectives and does not honour the principles of FPIC.³¹

Non-First Nations views of the consultation process' adherence to FPIC

- 5.32 Views of non-First Nations groups on the consultation process' adherence and recognition of FPIC varied.
- 5.33 The South Gippsland Shire Council acknowledged that Sea Country of the Gunaikurnai would 'likely be affected by the offshore wind industry' and stated that engagement with the Bunurong Land Council and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Council would be critical.³²
- 5.34 Support for DCCEE's engagement with First Nations communities was put forward by some submitters, including the Clean Energy Council (CEC). In addition, the CEC suggested that consultation with Traditional Owners should consider whether there are suitable resources available to enable the engagement.³³

²⁹ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 3.

³⁰ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

³¹ GMTOAC, *Submission 31*, p. 3.

³² South Gippsland Shire Council, *Submission 10*, p. 2.

³³ Clean Energy Council, *Submission 36*, p. 3.

Proponents' engagement with First Nations communities

5.35 Proponents are required to lead consultation during the second stage of the offshore wind development process, during the feasibility licences and approvals stage. Some proponents have conducted public engagement with communities, and with First Nations groups, prior to this stage of the development process.

5.36 Southerly Ten, an offshore wind energy developer, described its approach to engagement in relation to potential offshore wind projects in the Gippsland area and stated that it has worked to engage meaningfully with First Nations communities:

In Gippsland, we have been working with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC). Since first meeting with them in 2017, we have built a strong and constructive relationship. This is the basis for current collaboration on economic development opportunities from delivering offshore wind in the region consistent with the Gunaikurnai Whole-of Country Plan.

Through GLaWAC and the Kinaway Victorian Chamber of Commerce we are engaging with Aboriginal-owned businesses and working to raise awareness and readiness to capitalise on supply opportunities in offshore wind.³⁴

5.37 The Gippsland Climate Change Network considered that proponents of offshore wind projects had engaged with Traditional Owner groups, which showed a 'significant and positive shift on how these groups are engaged in the development process, leading to a new paradigm in their involvement'.³⁵

Next chapter

5.38 The final chapter sets out the committee's views and recommendations.

³⁴ Southerly Ten, *Submission 35*, p. 8.

³⁵ Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 2.

Chapter 6

Committee's view and recommendations

Overview

- 6.1 The Australian Government has committed to an 82 per cent renewable electricity target by 2030. Although rapid progress has been made in the past five years, in 2023 renewables contributed nearly 40 per cent of Australia's electricity supply.¹ In order to achieve this target, significant additional renewable generation capacity will be required.
- 6.2 This increase in renewable generation is a key component to achieving Australia's legislated greenhouse gas emissions target of 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050.
- 6.3 Australia's significant wind resources are some of the best in the world, and an Australian offshore wind industry would make a considerable contribution to Australia's renewable electricity generation. The potential capacity of 67.4 gigawatts (GW) in the six identified priority areas in Australian waters is three times the generation capacity of Australia's current coal generation assets of 21 GW.
- 6.4 The legislative and regulatory framework to support an offshore wind industry has been established, and initial preparations for an offshore wind industry are currently underway with work being led by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). This work is focused on determining suitable regions for offshore wind development (Stage 1).
- 6.5 There are three key stages for the establishment of an offshore wind industry in Australia:
- Stage 1—initial consultation led by DCCEEW and regional zoning;
 - Stage 2—project proposals, feasibility studies, environmental impact assessments and management plan approvals, which include requirements for consultation on project-specific elements; and
 - Stage 3—project delivery, including the construction and operation of the project, including consultation on commercial licence arrangements.
- 6.6 In relation to Stage 1, the Australian Government has identified six priority areas for an offshore wind industry, and, after community consultation undertaken in line with the requirements of the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act), the Minister for Climate Change and Energy (the minister) recently declared six areas as suitable for offshore wind development. These areas were

¹ Clean Energy Council, [Clean Energy Australia 2024](#), March 2024.

identified for their strong consistent winds, demand for electricity, and proximity to existing grid infrastructure and port facilities, and include:

- off Gippsland, Victoria;
- Pacific Ocean off Hunter, New South Wales;
- Southern Ocean off west coast Victoria;
- Pacific Ocean off Illawarra, New South Wales;
- Bass Strait off northern Tasmania; and
- Indian Ocean off Bunbury, Western Australia.²

6.7 The committee's inquiry examined the consultation process undertaken by DCCEEW in these six regions. This chapter draws together the committee's view on the key themes raised through the inquiry, and makes several recommendations.

Consultation undertaken during the regional zoning stage

6.8 During this inquiry, the committee heard a range of perspectives from communities and organisations who participated in Stage 1 consultations. The consultation was led by DCCEEW during the initial consultation and regional zoning stage, which culminated with decisions by the minister to declare an area as suitable for offshore wind in each of the six consultation areas.

6.9 During Stage 1, no construction is able to take place, and under the OEI Act, public consultation is required to inform the minister's zoning decisions. The OEI Act requires that a notice be published on DCCEEW website, which outlines the area proposed for declaration, invites submissions from the public, and provides information on the submission process, which must be for at least a 60-day period.

6.10 In addition to the submission process, public information sessions were held in each of the priority areas, and advertised through social media and radio.

6.11 Between August 2022 and May 2024 consultation processes were undertaken in each of the six priority areas. They resulted in a decrease in the size of the declared areas from those initially proposed, exclusions of certain sensitive areas, as well as other significant changes. These are discussed below.

Support for the DCCEEW-led consultation process

6.12 The committee notes the high level of engagement through the written submission element of the DCCEEW public consultation process in each of the six priority areas. Submission numbers ranged from 270 for the northern Tasmania consultation process to more than 14 200 submissions for the Illawarra consultation process.

² DCCEEW, *Submission 61*, p. 4.

- 6.13 Evidence was received from several submitters that the consultation process led by DCCEEW was similar to other Australian Government consultation processes, and that there had been sufficient opportunities for the community to engage with the process.³

Concerns raised in relation to the DCCEEW-led consultation process

- 6.14 On the other hand, concerns were raised by some community members and stakeholders that the Stage 1 consultation process was a 'box ticking exercise for DCCEEW', with some saying that the process had been a 'failure'.⁴
- 6.15 The committee notes evidence received during this inquiry that for many community members, the public Stage 1 consultation process was the first time that community members were aware of a proposal for an offshore wind industry.
- 6.16 Some submitters told the committee that they had not been aware of any proposal for an offshore wind industry until letterbox drops were conducted by DCCEEW, and that they did not feel there was enough information provided at that early stage.
- 6.17 The Australian Centre for Culture, Environment, Society and Space (ACCESS) stated that, in its view, it was possible that community frustrations had resulted from the consultation process required by the OEI Act, rather than the actions of DCCEEW.⁵
- 6.18 The committee notes that the main frustrations expressed by submitters about the Stage 1 consultation process were: short timeframes for making submissions or engaging, which put pressure on community members and business owners to contribute; and finding the information provided by DCCEEW as either generic, difficult to find or limited to the early stage of development.⁶ Other

³ See, for example, Clean Energy Council, *Submission 36*, p. 2; Friends of the Earth Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 2; Sea Shepherd Australia, *Submission 27*, pp. 1–3; Nature Conservation Council of NSW, *Submission 41*, p. 2; Wollongong City Council, *Submission 23*, p. 1; Hunter Workers, *Submission 182*, p. 2; Committee for the Hunter, *Submission 32*, p. 3; Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Submission 33*, p. 1; Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, *Submission 45*, pp. 1–2; Gippsland Climate Change Network, *Submission 5*, p. 1.

⁴ Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF), *Submission 37*, p. 5; Recfishwest, *Submission 51*, p. 1.

⁵ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 40*, pp. 3 and 6.

⁶ See, for example, Responsible Renewables, *Submission 21*, p. 2; Warrnambool City Council, *Submission 18*, p. 1; Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast, *Submission 9*, p. 1.

concerns were raised in relation to the format and quality of information provided.⁷

Commercial and recreational fishing

- 6.19 Representatives of the fishing industry were particularly concerned about co-existence with prospective offshore wind projects, and their future use of the space.
- 6.20 The committee notes that the minister made several significant changes in declaring areas suitable for offshore wind which took into account the use of the area by fishers. Future feasibility licence holders in the Gippsland, Hunter and Bunbury areas are required to consult with representatives of the fishing industry during proponent-led consultations in Stage 2. Additionally, changes to the declared areas to avoid or minimise the impact on fishing were made in the northern Tasmania and Bunbury areas. In relation to the Bunbury declared area, the minister removed more than 60 per cent of the area requested by recreational fishers from the initial proposed area, in recognition of their concerns.

Potential environmental impacts

- 6.21 During its consultation process, DCCEEW received a number of concerns about potential environmental impacts of offshore wind development.
- 6.22 Potential impacts to marine life as a result of disruption of shipping was raised by several submitters in the consultation process and during the inquiry.⁸
- 6.23 Evidence was also received that outlined concerns of potential direct impacts by offshore wind farms on marine life and birds, including the impact of the infrastructure and cables connecting them to the shore.
- 6.24 In declaring the areas off Gippsland and the Illawarra, the minister excluded areas nearest the shore to reduce the impact on migrating whales, and to avoid an area of whale migration and reproduction. The Australian Government has commissioned further research on the potential environmental impacts of offshore wind.
- 6.25 The committee considers that potential impacts on important environmental issues will be further addressed during future consultation undertaken in Stage 2, as part of the environmental impact assessment requirements. This is outlined below.

⁷ See, for example, ARFF, *Submission 37*, p. 2; Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, p. 1.

⁸ Imagine Cruises, *Submission 13*, p. 1.

Free, prior and informed consent

- 6.26 Several First Nations groups told the committee that DCCEEW's engagement had been poor, and did not adhere to the principles of free, prior and informed consent.
- 6.27 Of particular concern was the length of time provided to make a submission through the DCCEEW consultation process, and the lack of resources available to undertake the work required.
- 6.28 First Nations groups put forward concerns over the potential impact of offshore wind developments on Sea Country, and expressed disappointment that conversations had not taken place with DCCEEW or the minister regarding cultural significance of waterways and celestial sites.⁹
- 6.29 First Nations groups also stated that they had not provided consent for offshore wind projects, and one Traditional Owner group stated that it felt compelled to engage in the development process even though it had not provided consent.
- 6.30 Submitters drew attention to the work of the First Nations Clean Energy Network, particularly its best practice principles for clean energy projects.¹⁰ These principles include: engaging respectfully; prioritising clear, accessible and accurate information; ensuring economic benefits are shared; ensuring cultural competency; and regular reporting back on commitments made.¹¹
- 6.31 DCCEEW highlighted a number of actions to increase understanding, knowledge and appreciation of First Nations cultures, and acknowledged that in order for the offshore wind industry to develop, access would be needed to First Nations lands and waters.

Future consultation in Stage 2 of the offshore renewable electricity process

- 6.32 After the minister declares an area as suitable for offshore wind, the process enters the second stage which focuses on the proposed projects, including project proposals, feasibility studies and approvals. This stage includes multiple opportunities for public consultation on projects proposed for the declared areas.
- 6.33 During this stage, the proponents lead consultation through the feasibility licence application stage and through the development of a management plan.
- 6.34 A separate environmental impact assessment is undertaken during this stage, and takes place in line with the requirements of the *Environment Protection and*

⁹ Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, *Submission 2*, p. 1; Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

¹⁰ WWF Australia, *Submission 30*, p. 6; Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 59*, p. 4.

¹¹ Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 59*, p. 4.

Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). This process includes opportunities for public consultation as set out in the EPBC Act.

Concluding comments

- 6.35 Australia's offshore wind industry is in its early stages, with several projects in the nascent planning stages and none currently operating. The Australian Government has established the legislative and regulatory framework for the operation of an offshore wind industry, and is currently working through the first regional zoning stage to develop an offshore renewable energy industry.
- 6.36 Broad community and stakeholder support is a significant aspect of the development of a new industry and the construction and operation of major infrastructure projects. Public consultation is built into various stages of the development process, with the first stage of consultation undertaken by DCCEEW in line with the requirements of the OEI Act.
- 6.37 The next stage of consultation will be led by project proponents, guided by the OEI Act's requirements and conditions set out in the declaration instruments for each region. As project details are developed and refined, environmental approvals will also likely be required, including further consultations with communities.
- 6.38 The committee notes the many economic, social and environmental benefits that will flow from the development of an offshore wind industry. Thousands of jobs will be created, new and existing businesses will be supported (with many in regional areas), the electricity grid will be diversified and strengthened, and Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced.
- 6.39 The committee also acknowledges that for many community members and business owners in areas adjacent to proposed offshore wind developments, there will naturally be a level of hesitancy towards a new industry. Carefully planned community engagement from the earliest stages is vital in order to respond to concerns over potential impacts to the environment, jobs and visual amenity.
- 6.40 In the committee's view, DCCEEW has met its requirements under the OEI Act for public consultation during Stage 1 given this is the earliest stage in the consultation process. However, there will always be room for improvement in the consultation process. There are also lessons to be learnt for future public engagement in the six priority areas by proponents.
- 6.41 The committee considers that community members have adequate opportunities to participate in public consultation under the OEI Act, and notes that DCCEEW has offered additional opportunities by holding information sessions and advertising the process widely.

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- 6.42 The committee notes the strong concerns put forward by First Nations groups, and considers that DCCEEW's engagement with Traditional Owner groups could be improved.
- 6.43 The committee is concerned by the role of misinformation and disinformation and deliberate amplification of this by bad faith actors throughout the consultation process. The committee considers the Australian Government must play a role combatting these threats, including through early engagement and localised information.
- 6.44 The significant changes made in the six declared areas, including a reduction in size of each area, the exclusion of certain sensitive areas, as well as the conditions placed on infrastructure projects and consultation requirements, were a direct response to community and stakeholder views provided through the DCCEEW consultation process. This demonstrates that the consultation process has been effective and has responded to environmental concerns by avoiding species' migration pathways, while balancing the needs of commercial and recreational fishers with the need for additional renewable electricity.
- 6.45 The committee is reassured that consultation is built into the next stage of the development process, and is pleased that community members will have the opportunity to engage with proponents as details about individual projects are refined and publicised.
- 6.46 It is vital that proponents provide meaningful engagement opportunities with community members, and provide localised and targeted information for different marine users and local community members.
- 6.47 The pressing need for additional renewable electricity generation capacity is undeniable, and Australia needs to transition away from our ageing fossil fuel generation assets with the support of the community. The needs of all users of Australian waters must be considered in order to allow commercial and recreational interests to be maintained, with renewable offshore electricity contributing to lowering Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

Recommendations

First Nations engagement

- 6.48 The committee considers that First Nations engagement by DCCEEW as part of the public consultation process could be improved in order to listen to First Nations concerns for Sea Country potentially affected by offshore wind developments. Information should be provided which is culturally aware and responsive to First Nations concerns. DCCEEW officials in particular should consider providing longer timeframes for Traditional Owner groups to participate in the public consultation process.

Recommendation 1

- 6.49** The committee recommends that the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) consider ways to improve engagement with relevant First Nations and Traditional Owner groups in areas declared suitable for offshore wind developments.

Public consultation process

- 6.50** The committee is of the view that although the public consultation process for Stage 1 has been undertaken in line with the requirements of the OEI Act framework, it is understandable that there is strong demand by community members for more targeted, localised information. This would alleviate some community uncertainties, particularly regarding the use of the declared area by various commercial and recreational stakeholders.
- 6.51** DCCEEW should also consider providing contextual information about the need to transition away from ageing fossil fuel assets and increase Australia's renewable electricity generation capacity. DCCEEW should ensure that there is an overarching national narrative on the need for the energy transition, including the benefits of renewable energy projects and how communities can contribute to and benefit from the energy transition.
- 6.52** More detailed, early information for communities would go some way to combatting misinformation and disinformation that can exacerbate community confusion or concerns throughout the consultation process.

Recommendation 2

- 6.53** The committee recommends that DCCEEW engagement during public consultation processes provide targeted and localised information for each declared area. This should include a meaningful, physical presence to provide information, listen to concerns, and help the local community to feed into management plans and desired community benefit from projects.
- 6.54** Further, DCCEEW should improve its communication with local communities to provide a clear narrative about the broader context of offshore renewable energy, including the need to transition away from ageing fossil fuel generation assets and other reasons for the energy transition.

Recommendation 3

- 6.55** The committee recommends that DCCEEW in conjunction with the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, oversee ongoing engagement from proponents with local businesses, worker representatives, marine users, and community groups as a central point for engagement.

Recommendation 4

- 6.56 The committee recommends the Australian Government and DCCEEW proactively ensure that foreign actors, spam engagement, and misinformation and disinformation do not overpower local community voices from being heard in local public debate.**
- 6.57 The committee also sees benefit in the Stage 2 management plans being subject to public consultation, before any approval for construction is given and licences granted by the regulator. While the regulations require consultation with affected parties, community members are only able to view a management plan summary after it is approved.

Recommendation 5

- 6.58 The committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the *Offshore Electricity Act 2021* to require public consultation on management plans submitted to the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, prior to approval of the plan for construction activities and the granting of a commercial license.**

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young
Chair

Coalition Senators' Dissenting Report

Background

- 1.1 Australians are suffering in an energy crisis created by the Labor Government's all-eggs-in-one-basket 'renewables-only' plan which aims to prematurely close existing baseload power stations and suffocate the supply to make way for an 82 per cent renewables electricity grid by 2030, and nearly 100 per cent by 2050.
- 1.2 As a direct consequence of Labor's plan, electricity prices have surged up to \$1300 higher than promised,¹ a record number of households are on hardship arrangements with energy retailers,² and around 30 000 businesses have collapsed³ with many citing energy prices as a key factor.
- 1.3 Despite all of this, emissions have not gone down. They remain at 29 per cent below 2005 levels which is approximately to the level inherited by the Albanese Labor Government when they came to office.⁴ In contrast, under the Coalition, emissions reduced from 12 per cent below 2005 levels in 2013 to 29 per cent in 2022.
- 1.4 For three years, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, has recklessly raced towards Labor's unachievable and uneconomic targets⁵ with no concern for the real world impacts. Regional and coastal communities have been steamrolled in the process.
- 1.5 Unlike utility-scale wind and solar projects onshore, and associated onshore transmission projects, which are the primary domain of state governments, the Commonwealth Government has primary carriage for offshore infrastructure such as offshore wind zones.
- 1.6 This dissenting report comments on the: Australian Government's consultation process, including the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water- (DCCEEW) led information sessions; the inquiry conducted by this committee; and the information gathering session held by Senators Cadell and Blyth.

¹ See: Australian Energy Regulator (AER), [Default market offer prices 2025-26: Draft determination](#), March 2025; AER, [Default Market Offer Prices 2021-22 Final determination](#), April 2021.

² AER, [Schedule 4—Quarter 2 2024-25 retail performance data](#), 18 March 2025.

³ See: Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), [Series 1 and 2: Insolvency Statistics](#), 14 April 2025.

⁴ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), [National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Quarterly Update: June 2024](#), 4 December 2024.

⁵ Australian Energy Market Commission, [Emissions targets statement under the national energy laws](#), April 2025, p. 2.

- 1.7 In order to hear from the affected communities, Senators Cadell and Blyth conducted an 'information gathering session' in lieu of formal inquiry hearings. Throughout this dissenting report, the statements made at these sessions are referred to as 'statements' or 'information' to distinguish them from testimony before a formal Senate inquiry.
- 1.8 As a result of egregious mistreatment by the Albanese Government in pursuit of offshore wind, impacted regional communities began publicly rallying in protest.

Ideology over communities

- 1.9 This inquiry has revealed the extent to which Labor and the Greens have prioritised their ideological pursuit of an 82 per cent renewables target over the lived realities of coastal and regional Australians. Their alliance has elevated abstract climate targets and offshore wind symbolism over genuine community wellbeing, environmental stewardship and economic sustainability.
- 1.10 Rather than seek a balanced energy mix or build public trust, Labor and the Greens have chosen to ignore, dismiss, and silence the voices of coastal and regional Australians. By refusing to hold public hearings, the committee was not able to hear evidence of community backlash and allowing proponents to shape the narrative unchallenged in the government's consultation process, they have treated regional consultation as an obstacle instead of a responsibility.
- 1.11 The committee failed to hold any public hearings, despite months of submissions, protest, and requests, is an insult to the very people this inquiry is supposed to serve. It confirms that the Labor-Greens alliance views regional and coastal communities as collateral damage in their ideological crusade, not partners in the energy transition.

Flawed community engagement

- 1.12 Minister Bowen declared six offshore wind zones, and in four zones—Hunter (NSW), Illawarra (NSW), Southern Ocean (Vic) and Indian Ocean (WA)—the community engagement process was deeply flawed and these flaws were deliberately ignored by the Albanese Government.
- 1.13 To install utility scale offshore wind projects along pristine coastal areas marks an enormous change for those communities expected to host such industrial facilities. These coastlines would see wind turbines up to 270 metres tall installed in the ocean, either bolted to the seabed or on floating platforms, with kilometres of transmission lines and substations to facilitate the transportation of power to major load centres on the mainland.

- 1.14 During the committee's inquiry these communities raised concerns along economic, environmental and social lines. It is also notable that many of their local economies are heavily reliant on tourism.⁶
- 1.15 Despite the lack of public hearings, this inquiry exposed a deliberate mistreatment of coastal communities on the part of the Albanese Government with evidence received that:
- locals were not properly informed about public consultations;
 - unions were co-opted to encourage positive submissions;
 - in-person briefings were limited, and held at inconvenient times and locations;
 - senior citizens were advised they could not make written submissions;
 - many important questions raised by residents were left unanswered;
 - environmental concerns were ignored;
 - economic concerns were ignored; and
 - social concerns were ignored.
- 1.16 Evidence presented to the committee shows that the government's consultation process was not only inadequate, but treated by the Albanese Government as a mere box-ticking exercise with the outcome predetermined.
- 1.17 Submissions to the inquiry and statements at the information gathering session demonstrated a deeply flawed community engagement process.
- 1.18 As Mr Ben Abbott, President of No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, stated at the information gathering session, that in Port Stephens in the Hunter region, 'There were no letterbox drops, no advertisements in the local news, nor on social media, and no notice of community meetings'.⁷ He separately submitted to the inquiry that the 'majority of Port Stephens residents only became aware of the proposal when the zone was declared in July, 2023'.⁸
- 1.19 Alarming, DCCEE-led information sessions began only six business days after being announced.
- 1.20 The Newcastle and Port Stephens Game Fish Club submitted that DCCEE-led community information sessions were 'commonly scheduled during business hours on weekdays when most of the community is otherwise engaged'⁹ and

⁶ No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, *Submission 12*, p. 9; Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast, *Submission 9*, p. 3; New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc., *Submission 4* pp. 2–4; Philippa Saunders, *Submission 155*, p. 2.

⁷ Information gathering session, 6 March 2025.

⁸ No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, *Submission 12*, p. 2.

⁹ Newcastle & Port Stephens Game Fish Club Ltd, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

Responsible Future (Illawarra) submitted that 'Port Kembla, Shellharbour, and Gerringong sessions were held from 10 am to 12 pm on weekdays'.¹⁰

- 1.21 This lack of basic information left many residents completely unaware that significant offshore wind projects were being proposed for their regions.
- 1.22 Local governments also submitted that there was insufficient support to arrive at an informed position. The Warrnambool City Council submitted that 'during the consultation process on the proposed [Southern Ocean Offshore Wind Zone], Council was faced with pressure to form a position on a proposal that we have limited resources to assess or understand from a technical perspective'.¹¹
- 1.23 The Warrnambool City Council also stated that 'the community wants factual and independent information on all aspects of an offshore wind proposal'.¹² It is clear that this information is lacking in the proposed Southern Ocean Offshore Wind Zone.
- 1.24 Not only was the government-led consultation insufficient, but communication from the Albanese Government more broadly was either 'poor' or lacking with traditional owners and land councils. Mr Andrew Smith from the Worimi Aboriginal Land Council submitted that 'communications to date, from the Labor Government have been extremely poor'.¹³
- 1.25 Sea Country Alliance, an alliance between traditional owners with responsibility for sea country, submitted a number of concerns that reflect a lack of communication between the Government and traditional owners.¹⁴
- 1.26 Not only did these Labor failures cause distress and frustration to communities across the nation, it betrayed communities' trust and set a poor precedent for future infrastructure projects, including some which may be critical to our nation's energy security.
- 1.27 The government-led consultation sessions themselves were frequently criticised for providing too little information, incorrect information, and giving airtime to the offshore wind industry in particular.
- 1.28 The Coalition members note that while DCCEE staff acted respectfully and appropriately, it appears that they were insufficiently resourced, and some communities felt insufficiently informed.
- 1.29 Researchers from the University of Wollongong and Deakin University submitted that 'many people expressed frustration that there was insufficient

¹⁰ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc., *Submission 24*, p. 4.

¹¹ Warrnambool City Council, *Submission 18*.

¹² Warrnambool City Council, *Submission 18*.

¹³ Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, *Submission 2*.

¹⁴ Sea Country Alliance, *Submission 64*.

information available about important implications of offshore wind'.¹⁵ They also noted that 'department staff took their role seriously, acted with respect towards people in sometimes hostile environments, clearly explained the sequencing of the approvals process, and acknowledged that some questions could not be answered at the time'.¹⁶

- 1.30 Susanne Taylor-Rees explained at the information gathering session that the government-led consultation in WA 'felt like a tick the box, but even more than that it felt like an advertorial for the wind industry, we felt like it was a promotional event'. Ms Taylor-Rees also stated that proponents attended the events without being clearly marked as proponents.¹⁷
- 1.31 Sue Brown and Alexander O'Brien submitted that industry was privy to information prior to the public, and that indicates that Government 'concessions' to the zone area may have been confirmed prior to community consultations concluding.¹⁸
- 1.32 Statements from the participants at the information gathering session noted the omission of key visual elements, such as substations, from promotional materials further underscores a lack of transparency and an attempt to downplay the industrial scale of these projects. They expressed concerns about the accuracy and completeness of information provided during consultation sessions.¹⁹
- 1.33 Ms Taylor-Rees stated at the information gathering session that:

There were large montages all around the room of what they believe [wind turbines] may look like on our geographe bay ... those montages were totally missing any of the substations that are required ... I questioned at length ... and the response I got was ... 'It was a considered decision not to include them in the imagery because they didn't present well' ... that is misleading the public I feel.²⁰
- 1.34 Imagine Cruises submitted that while an artist's rendition at a meeting 'showed no turbines' a landmass shorter than the proposed turbines which exists at about the same distance is currently visible from the shore.²¹
- 1.35 The lack of environmental experts and engineers on the government-led consultation panels raised serious questions about the government's

¹⁵ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 42*.

¹⁶ ACCESS University of Wollongong, *Submission 42*.

¹⁷ Information gathering session, 6 March 2025.

¹⁸ Ms Sue Brown & Mr Alexander O'Brien, *Submission 179*.

¹⁹ Information gathering session, 6 March 2025.

²⁰ Information gathering session, 6 March 2025.

²¹ Imagine Cruises, *Submission 13*, p. 1.

understanding of the potential impacts. Coalition members heard, and found in submissions, that panels were often unable to answer questions, and attendees were repeatedly directed to a website instead of receiving direct responses.

- 1.36 The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) submitted that ministerial correspondence about the exclusion zones was contradicted by industry information. The Minister noted in correspondence to the AFTA that ‘typically, in these examples, an exclusion zone of 50 metres is established’ while the AFTA noted that ‘feedback from proponents’ is that the exclusion zones will most likely be 1.5 km at a minimum’.²²
- 1.37 Key industries, such as commercial and recreational fishing and tourism, reported a severe lack of specific and meaningful consultation, despite the potential for significant economic disruption. Representatives from these sectors fear devastating consequences for their livelihoods and local economies, concerns that appear to have been largely disregarded by the Labor Government.
- 1.38 Mr Abbott stated at the information gathering session that:
- Our community is established, built, and thrives on tourism, fishing, and a beach culture and a coastal culture ... I’ve walked around 60, 70 shops within Nelson Bay [off the Hunter, NSW offshore wind priority area] and surrounding areas. All but two people, business owners, are verbally opposed to it, and concerned that ... their turnover will drop 15 to 20, 25 per cent.²³
- 1.39 Ms Taylor-Rees stated at the information gathering session that ‘Bunbury has a dolphin visitor centre where last weekend ... I was swimming with dolphins on the beach, where they want to put [wind turbines]. It’s too much to risk’.²⁴
- 1.40 The submission from the No Offshore Wind Farm Zone—Warrnambool & District group raised the possible impact on the Logans Beach Whale Nursery and the associated whale migration highway from any offshore wind development adjacent to the coastline off Warrnambool and Port Fairy.²⁵
- 1.41 The Hunter Community Environment Centre, submitting in support of offshore wind noted that ‘far greater effort is required by the DCCEEW to provide local communities with the necessary information to develop an informed opinion’.²⁶
- 1.42 The consistent refrain from community members is a demand for answers and transparency, a demand that has been repeatedly met with evasiveness, a lack

²² Australian Fishing Trade Association, *Submission 3*, pp. 2–3.

²³ Information gathering session, 6 March 2025.

²⁴ Information gathering session, 6 March 2025.

²⁵ No Offshore Wind Farm Zone—Warrnambool & District, *Submission 181*, p. 1.

²⁶ Hunter Community Environment Centre, *Submission 68*, p. 5.

of information, and a sense that the outcome was predetermined. This approach fosters resentment and erodes any semblance of social licence for these contentious projects.

- 1.43 Coalition members have concluded that Labor has no one but themselves to blame for regional communities largely rejecting offshore wind given impacted residents have been shown no cause to believe the proposed offshore wind zones are in the national interest much less the interest of their local communities.
- 1.44 In 2023, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) released a comprehensive guidance paper which made it clear that early, genuine, and locally tailored consultation is a non-negotiable element in building and maintaining social licence for major offshore energy projects.²⁷
- 1.45 The Commissioner warned against 'consultation fatigue',²⁸ inadequate visual modelling, and one-size-fits-all information sessions. He advocated for community-led engagement processes, including the use of local liaison committees, genuine two-way dialogue, transparent presentation of visual and environmental impacts, and outreach tailored to the unique economic, environmental, and cultural dynamics of each region.²⁹
- 1.46 Yet, as this inquiry has exposed, not one of those principles was followed by the Albanese Government. Information sessions were scheduled during business hours on weekdays, traditional owners were left in the dark, visuals misrepresented the industrial scale of proposed infrastructure and decision making occurred before communities were properly informed, let alone consulted.
- 1.47 The fact that Labor's consultation approach so clearly contradicted the AEIC's own published advice underscores that the process was designed to manufacture consent, not secure it.

Offshore wind flaws

- 1.48 The Coalition members of the committee also note that the significant cost of offshore wind generation was also raised in a number of submissions and during the information gathering session.
- 1.49 This concern accords with the Australian Energy Market Operator's Integrated System Plan, as well as the least cost model in the independent modelling

²⁷ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC), [*Considerations for Offshore Wind Industry on Community Engagement*](#), November 2023.

²⁸ AEIC, [*Considerations for Offshore Wind Industry on Community Engagement*](#), November 2023.

²⁹ AEIC, [*Considerations for Offshore Wind Industry on Community Engagement*](#), November 2023.

undertaken by Frontier Economics on the Coalition's plan for a balanced energy mix.

- 1.50 The Integrated System Plan models a least-cost system, and notably only includes the bare minimum 9 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity required by Victoria's offshore wind target.³⁰ This strongly suggests that the model would include no offshore wind whatsoever at the prices expected under the current Government.
- 1.51 Frontier's modelling, without the constraint of the Victorian offshore wind target, included no offshore wind at all in a similar least-cost model.³¹
- 1.52 Together, this evidence suggests strongly that there is now a questionable case on the basis of national interest for introducing swathes of new offshore wind zones throughout the country.

Conclusion

- 1.53 No matter how much evidence mounted exposing process failures and blatant disregard for local communities, the committee failed to hold any public hearings despite Coalition members publicly calling for hearings to be held.
- 1.54 This inquiry was launched only because the Coalition pushed for it. But now, and despite Coalition members' repeated attempts to hold formal hearings, and even after two extensions, the committee refused to act on these requests.
- 1.55 The inquiry's cancellation or 'mothballing' of formal hearings meant that the inquiry itself was as poor as the flawed government community engagement process for the offshore wind zones. It effectively demonstrated to thousands of individuals and community groups, which had legitimate concerns about proposed offshore wind zones, that it wasn't just the Albanese Government which was ignoring them, but also the Australian Senate.
- 1.56 In conclusion, this dissenting report finds that the Albanese Labor Government has failed in its duty to conduct a genuine and transparent consultation process regarding offshore wind developments. The Coalition will continue to stand with coastal and regional communities and demand a more accountable, transparent and community driven approach to energy infrastructure. If Australia is to meet its future energy needs, it must do so with the consent, not the contempt, of its coastal and regional communities. The Coalition is committed to restoring that principle to the heart of energy planning.

³⁰ Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), [2024 Integrated System Plan](#), June 2024, p. 31; AEMO, [2024 ISP chart data](#), June 2024, Figure 2.

³¹ Frontier Economics, [Report 2—Economic analysis of including nuclear power in the NEM](#), December 2024, pp. 22, 26.

Recommendations

1.57 Coalition members of the committee recommend that:

Recommendation 1

1.58 The offshore wind zones declared in the Hunter, Illawarra, Southern Ocean and Indian Ocean be cancelled.

Recommendation 2

1.59 The Senate hold a second inquiry where formal public hearings are held in all six communities which will be impacted by the offshore wind zones declared by the Albanese Government to identify lessons learnt which can be applied to community engagement for all future new electricity infrastructure.

Recommendation 3

1.60 The Australian Government adopts principles to govern new electricity infrastructure which places communities at the centre, and makes decisions which account for the interests of local communities in terms of economic, environmental, and social impacts.

Recommendation 4

1.61 For all new and emerging energy technology and major infrastructure, where robust impact assessments are not readily available, extend the minimum public consultation and review period from 60 days to 180 days to allow for stakeholder engagement, expert analysis and public scrutiny.

Senator Ross Cadell
Member

Senator Leah Blyth
Member

Appendix 1

Submissions and additional information

Submissions

- 1 Wuillemin Fishing Company
- 2 Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council
- 3 Australian Fishing Trade Association
- 4 New South Wales Game Fishing Association Inc.
- 5 Gippsland Climate Change Network
- 6 Climate Action Newcastle Inc
- 7 Rainforest Reserves Australia
- 8 Newcastle & Port Stephens Game Fish Club Ltd
- 9 Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast
- 10 South Gippsland Shire Council
- 11 BlueFloat Energy
- 12 No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens
- 13 Imagine Cruises
- 14 Oceanex Energy
- 15 Albatross Fisheries Pty Ltd
- 16 Geoscience Australia
- 17 Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations
- 18 Warrnambool City Council
- 19 The Game Fishing Association of Australia
- 20 Western Rock Lobster Council Inc.
- 21 Responsible Renewables
- 22 Moonshadow - TQC Cruises
- 23 Wollongong City Council
- 24 Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc.
- 25 Seafood Industry Australia
- 26 Offshore Infrastructure Regulator
- 27 Sea Shepherd Australia
- 28 Business Hunter
- 29 HunterNet Co-operative Ltd
- 30 WWF-Australia
- 31 Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- 32 Committee for the Hunter
- 33 Hunter Jobs Alliance
- 34 National Rational Energy Network Inc.
- 35 Southerly Ten
- 36 Clean Energy Council
- 37 Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation
- 38 Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy

- 39 BirdLife Australia
- 40 ACCESS University of Wollongong
- 41 Nature Conservation Council of NSW
- 42 Community Power Agency
- 43 Institute of Public Affairs
- 44 IOH Health
- 45 Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union
- 46 Victorian National Parks Association
- 47 Hunter Wildlife Rescue
- 48 Friends of the Earth Australia
- 49 Parents For Climate
- 50 Good For The Gong
- 51 Recfishwest
- 52 Hills of Gold Preservation Inc
- 53 Doctors for the Environment Australia
- 54 Peoples Climate Assembly
- 55 Port Stephens Greens
- 56 Geraldton Fishermen's Cooperative
- 57 EcoNetwork Port Stephens
- 58 Humane Society International Australia
- 59 Australian Marine Conservation Society
- 60 TasRex
- 61 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- 62 Smart Energy Council
- 63 Sherry Ellen Pty Ltd
- 64 Sea Country Alliance
- 65 RES Australia Pty Ltd
- 66 Western Australian Fishing Industry Council
- 67 Wollongong Climate Action Network
- 68 Hunter Community Environment Centre
- 69 Maritime Union of Australia & the Electrical Trades Union
- 70 Wilderness Society
- 71 Biodiversity Council
- 72 Tasmanian Government
- 73 Surfers for Climate
- 74 RE-Alliance
- 75 Australian Conservation Foundation
- 76 Ms Joanne Davies
- 77 Mr Timothy Egerton-Green
- 78 Mr Ben Ewald
- 79 Vincent Lizdenis
- 80 Mr Rick Harding
 - Attachment 1

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- 81 Mr Rory Milne
82 Dr Peter French
83 Mr Terry Stanton
84 Mr Nic Sofoulis
85 Mr Elon Alva
86 Fedele Camarda
87 Mr Robert Gibson
88 May-Ring Chen
89 Mr Leonard Hagan
90 Mr Antony Old
91 Mr Shane Milligan
92 Mr Shane Murphy
93 Mr Daniel Hill
94 Ms Joyce Bok
95 Mr Bill Rookyard
96 Prof Eugenie Lumbers
97 Mrs Cindy Harrison
98 Ms Erin Brinkley
99 Mr Ross Kennedy
100 Mrs Rebecca Lachlan
101 Mrs Tracey Charles
102 Mr John Vild
103 Mr Andrew Bain
104 Mr Jon Matthews
105 Mr Rowan Huxtable
 • Attachment 1

106 Mr James Cahill
107 Mr Ian McDonald
108 Lesley Willing
109 Ms Narelle Hopkins
110 Terry Romaro
111 Mr Neil Wynn
112 Mr John Bennett
113 Professor Emma Lee
114 Mrs Louise Meyrick
115 Mr Ryan Fleay
116 Mr Peter Wilson
117 Mr Bob Cole
118 Mr Alexander Petersen
119 Ms Rosemary Sutherland
120 Mr John Ingle
 • 120.1 Supplementary to submission 120
 • 120.2 Supplementary to submission 120

- 121 Mr Andrew Kyriacou
- 122 The Hon. Nola Marino, Joint submission with The Hon. Dr Steve Thomas MLC and Ben Small
- 123 Ms Lynn Bain
- 124 Mr Steve Norris
- 125 Mr Ben Crossling
- 126 Mr Stephen Byrnes
- 127 Ms Theresa Huxtable
- 128 Ms Anne Ryan
- 129 Mr John Watson
- 130 Mrs Astrid Boot
- 131 Mr Darryl Best
- 132 Mrs Sarah-Jane Thorne
- 133 Mr James Scott Chalmers
- 134 Mr Christopher Harrigan
- 135 Mr Chris Satara
- 136 Mr Peter Bailey
- 137 Mr Peter Stanich
- 138 Mr William Pinkerton
- 139 Ms Robyn Bradley
- 140 Mr Ian Roberts
- 141 Mr Martin Harrison
- 142 Ms Helen Lee
- 143 Petrina Nips
- 144 Ms Michele Browne
- 145 Mr Paul Hewson
- 146 Ms Hayley x
- 147 Mr Fergus Sharwood
 - Attachment 1
- 148 Mr Grant Drinkwater
- 149 Ms Angela Tedling
- 150 Ms Tammy Bradicich
- 151 Mr Tim Meharg
- 152 Mr Rex Littlewood
- 153 Mr Richard Sheehy and Mrs Deborah Sheehy
- 154 Mr Rick Scott-Murphy
- 155 Philippa Saunders
- 156 Mr Howard Chapman
- 157 Mrs Meagan Ambrose
- 158 Mr Michael Richardson
- 159 Mr Tony Wolfe
- 160 Mr James Beckwith
- 161 Mr Paul Clarence

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- 162 Mr Douglas Burns
- 163 Mr Mark Fetterplace
- 164 Mrs Bernadette Feltham and Mr Bradley Feltham
- 165 Darren Glover
- 166 Mr Rory McNeill
- 167 Cr Mark Croxford
- 168 Mr Andrew Anthony
- 169 Mrs Jennifer Scarra
- 170 Mr Richard Scarra
- 171 Mr Ross Dearden
- 172 Ms Anne Wybacz
- 173 Mr John Mills
- 174 Mr Col Poulter
- 175 Mrs Amanda De Lore
- 176 Mr Darryl Elliott
- 177 Mr Allan Kell
- 178 Ms Suzanne Vive
- 179 Ms Sue Brown & Mr Alexander O'Brien
- 180 Mr Michael Tibbs
- 181 No Offshore Wind Farm Zone - Warrnambool & District
 - Attachment 1
- 182 Hunter Workers
- 183 Australian Conservation Foundation - Community Submission
- 184 Dr Neville Lockhart
- 185 Mr Rodney Peterson
- 186 Mr Brian Tehan
- 187 Mr Mark Conti
- 188 Mr John Whalen
- 189 Ms Vicki Curran
 - Attachment 1
- 190 Ms Fran Corner
- 191 Mr John Burke
- 192 Ms Beatrix Illes
- 193 Ms Yvette Brown
- 194 Mr Jake Wilson
- 195 Ms Susanne Taylor-Rees
- 196 Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd
- 197 Commonwealth Fisheries Association
- 198 Shire of Harvey
 - Attachment 1
 - Attachment 2

- 199 Mr Charles Abela
- 200 Ms Carol Abela
- 201 Ms Melissa Barnard
- 202 Mr David Hancock
- 203 Ms Marguerite Potter
- 204 Ms Linda Karakousis
- 205 Mr Graham Solomon
- 206 Mrs Moira Etheridge
- 207 Mr Jason Smith
- 208 Mr John Smith
- 209 Mrs Gayle Kleinhans
- 210 Ms Evelyn Jelercic
- 211 Ms Sharon Dohnt
- 212 Mr Richard OBrien
- 213 Mr Philip Elmes
- 214 Ms Kerry Stratford
- 215 Mr Bruce Storey
- 216 Mr Jamie Culver
- 217 Mrs Jeannette Cullen
- 218 Mrs Sandra Cole
- 219 John Chapman
- 220 Mr Justin Dixon
- 221 Ms Carran Doolan
- 222 Tracie Davies
- 223 Dr Neryl East
- 224 Professor Michael Feneley
- 225 Illawarra Labor Members of Parliament
- 226 Dr Wilbur Hughes
- 227 Ann Rays
- 228 Mr Bill Jauncey
- 229 Douglas Hitchon
- 230 Terry Watts
- 231 Mr David Sivyer
- 232 Mr Michael Zaracostas
- 233 Ms Glenda Hilton
- 234 John McEwan
- 235 Mr Sven Gloor
- 236 Professor Emeritus Ivan Kennedy AM FRACI
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 • Attachment 1
288 Mr Kyle Treloar
 • Attachment 1
289 Cr Cath Blakey
 • Attachment 1
290 Ms Suzette Stevens
291 Ms Sharron Marks
292 Mrs Leanne Allman
 • Attachment 1
293 Raina Robinson
294 Carol-Ann Fletcher
 • Attachment 1
 • Attachment 2
 • Attachment 3
 • Attachment 4
 • Attachment 5
 • Attachment 6
295 Mr Chester Smith
296 Mr Nik Cubrilovic
297 Dr Jeremy Walker
 • Attachment 1
 • Attachment 2
 • Attachment 3
 • Attachment 4
298 Ms Tracy O'Brien
299 Confidential
300 Confidential
301 Confidential
302 RE and FE Tarbotton
303 Confidential
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306 Confidential
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309 Confidential
310 Confidential
311 Confidential

312 Ms Martine Shepherd

313 Mr Ian Webber

- Attachment 1
- Attachment 2
- Attachment 3

314 Ms Kate Smith

315 Ms Linda Hogg OAM

Additional Information

- 1 Representative sample of campaign letter (with variations) received over 90 times

Answer to Question on Notice

- 1 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, answer to written question on notice from Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 3 February 2025 (received 10 February 2025)